

HELLTOWN INC.

"THIS TOO SHALL PASS"

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Liner notes for this edition written by Edward Giles

Foreword provided by Darby E. Southgate, Ph.D.

Book design by Max Julian Eastman

tribe tapes



FOREWORD

Sociologist C. Wright Mills challenged us to use our sociological imagination by examining the invisible social forces of our personal milieux made up of history and culture. It is easy to see the past and categorize it as the days of the Industrial Revolution, the Roaring 20's, the Great Depression, and the like. It is much harder to locate the spirit of the culture in which we live. Eddie's art and music perfectly encapsulated our milieux.

Environments create and shape our lives. There is an interplay of macro and micro: the macro social forces influence and provide parameters of our micro experiences as we explore and manifest our existence. Eddie profoundly identifies and captures these forces eloquently within his productions. He artfully explains the social reproduction of the working class that, no matter their efforts, talents, or luck, are excluded from entering the inner circles of success. In a Bourdieuan treatment, he exposes himself as a product of a working-class immigrant family living in Queens, New York, with high hopes of experiencing the American Dream, one where all the correct inputs were made: love, support, religious foundation, expectations, aspirations, enculturation through exposure to art, literature, music, and philosophy.

He studied a curriculum of high-brow culture as a solitary endeavor, investing in a consorted development to locate his own inner peace, to quell the demon beast of normality and the mundane. Within him grew a deep love for the values of truth and beauty, not the superficial narcissism that has become commonplace today but a cultivated desire for transcendence. Yet this high hope was balanced against the harsh reality of a social world filled with bullies, hustlers, and adults charged with caring for not only the safety of their charges but also their psyches but were unable to provide that care, due to their pursuit of irresponsible selfish motives. He shares these early experiences and lays the groundwork for what would become the backdrop of life.

Mapping Eddie's artistic output shows a rigorous determination to produce. For nearly 5 decades he has committed himself to producing art and music. He has

created solo products, collaborations, and tirelessly helps and supports artists and upcoming artists in his love for the sub-underground community. No matter what medium, Eddie has been a champion for the subculture. Looking at photos from the early 80's at CBGBs punk shows, many show a young Eddie deeply in love for the music that challenges the banal; as then, he continues to show up to both produce and support. He connects people with one another and encourages creativity – any creativity, despite the sub-underground often becoming the snub-underground of exclusion and dismissal.

Only the best artists capture truth within their artistic expressions. It is these pieces that speak to humanity, that offer us a glimpse into another life with which we share our innermost thoughts, feelings, desires, hopes, fears, and shame. The story Eddie shares with us is raw, as raw as NYC in the 80's. But it is real. It is as real as he is. Which is quite an accomplishment in our milieux of idealized images, narcissism, hyper capitalism, and celebrity influencers. As his partner I am witness to the ways he moves in this world. He wishes that all creatives were able to exist on the fruits of their labor and not have to design a schizophrenic life where their artistic process is placed in the backseat of the survival car. He often laments that Noise is still underground and wishes noise artists were legitimized and able to profit from their craft. I stand to remind him that if this were to happen, even more interlopers would flock to flood the scene and blow it out forever. Trust fund families allocate their offspring into our subform; our *safe spaces* where *we* can express our beauty and truths and yell and scream at our alienation, exploitation, oppression, multinational corporate colonization. Isn't it enough that new Noise entrants come in with no real interest in the genre, just a passing whim – *it sounded fun!* –and claim academic connections with no bona fide to Marcuse and other sociologists from the Frankfurt School trying to sound profound as they twist dials and profess a discourse on the cultural apparatus? As a sociologist I ask, who can fly internationally to perform for less than 20 minutes only to fly out to the next show in another country? Who books these acts, these shows? Who manages these nimble acts? What is the organizational social structure that supports this but does not support it all? Why do they not invite

more working-class artists to join them? This is the cultural apparatus! This *is* the social reproduction of social class divisions, protecting its access-turf, protecting it like crack dealers did in NYC in the 80's. Bring this above ground? They will only block the access...again.

Throughout all our efforts, successes and failures, there is a quiet force that weaves it all together. Schopenhauer wrote ([1851] 1973), "...most *people* (originally "men") discover when they look back on their life that they have been living the whole-time ad interim, and are surprised to see that which they let go by so unregarded and unenjoyed was precisely their life, was precisely that in expectation of which they lived." That expectation is one's Will. Do What Thou Wilt, yes? As an active Templar in the Temple of Psychick Youth (1985-1989), I have seen my fair share of magicians/musicians. Harnessing magick, consciously or subconsciously, one moves moment-to-moment through the micro expressions that is the Self. While the mainstream performances have access to the great halls and basilicas, you will find Eddie in the basement, critically analyzing the current milieux and looping it back to us as art and music, in Helltown. This is his Will.

Darby E. Southgate, Ph.D.

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TRANSFER INFORMATION

"*This Too Shall Pass*" has been transferred using outboard devices from the Type IV master cassette sent to Sound of Pig in 1988. No digital editing was applied to this recording. Side B is of a greater length than Side A, causing an extended portion of silence and tape hiss after the conclusion of "A5 - Helltrain". This has been preserved to maintain the running order of the original tape release.

Max Eastman / Tribe Tapes

HELLTOWN INCORPORATED

"Hell is other people."

– Jean-Paul Sartre, *No Exit*, circa 1944

Helltown Incorporated was a sound, video, and performance project active from 1983 to 1990 in the borough of Queens, New York. The personal origins can be traced back to childhood, while its production and execution can be considered to a young person's experience of art, culture and the non-stop escapade, and energy of New York City in the mid 80's. It was a response to the abundance of activity in the underground art and music scenes throughout the Five Boroughs. Helltown Inc. was a product of the environment of that decade.

"This Too Shall Pass" was the only material that Helltown Inc. ever released. Two other tapes (*"Overtime in the Lower Decks"* and *"Music from The Cathode Ray Mission"*) were recorded, assembled, and edited, but never saw the light of day. By the end of 1988, my frustration and disappointment of the New York underground art, music and home taper community drove me to restart with a new and fiercer project that would eventually become the Power Electronics band Final Solution co-founded with Greg Scott; by 1990 Helltown Inc. went quiet as I focused all my attention to Final Solution.

In order to understand, and truly get behind the motives behind Helltown Inc., I felt it was time to offer the listener a descriptive background on the milieu of New York City during the Reaganomic era of the 1980's and some of the pertinent experiences that sparked creativity and drive to pursue experimental-industrial music and art in an age of MTV pop music, the "free market" feeding frenzy that ultimately ushered in yuppie scum that purchased large quantities of real estate in SoHo, Tribeca and the Lower East Side of Manhattan, and superfluous and deplorable "blue chip" art as a symbol of hyper-capitalism, while right outside the galleries front entrances, the city streets were rife with crime, drug use and violence. The dichotomous parallel was

at times vertigo inducing, moving from cold weather and roaming crackheads to pristine, interior gallery spaces with high dollar paintings and white wine chatter, then eventually back out to the cobblestone streets, where screaming and bottle breaking seemed ubiquitous to a city in shreds.

As the project developed, I realized that I was living in the world Helltown Incorporated was sonically creating and the music and art was a self-reflexive deciphering of an inner state of mind as the empirical reality of society seemed brutality harsh and often a never ceasing recursive nightmare of existential trauma while I constantly attempted some delusional insistence of fame and notoriety in the underground art movement; it was right around the proverbial corner if I just tried hard enough, I naïvely swallowed the notion of egalitarian meritocracy and hook line and sinker without ever considering social stratification or hegemonic slants of power and wealth directly associated with becoming successful to the point of sustainability.

Helltown Inc. was the entry point and the core source of art and youth damaged catharsis. But, despite it being a hopeless endeavor it was still a hell of a lot of fun! To be an agitator, a prankster, and the push past the gatekeepers, *en vogue* musicians and artists that permeated not only the New York scene but noticeability all other cities and art spaces I visited while performing as Helltown Inc., I consider the entire experience a lesson in business ethics, hierarchy and pecking orders even at the levels of the so-called DIY independent art/music community.

The project had no overtly personal politically motivated agenda, however it's important to point out indicators of that era. The renewal and gentrification of New York (especially the Times Square area and Long Island City) in the late 1990's were less than a decade away, but the rising tide of power and commerce was already being felt by the working class, the so-called "go-go 80's" stock market championed by then president Ronald Reagan's one-two punch of union busting and deregulated "unfettered" free market fantasy of the "trickle down economy" and the winner-take-all philosophy of Milton Friedman were not the tea leaf reading of economic forecasting of decades before, but of a new determinism built on powerful computer algorithms and "quants" using sophisticated technologically based platforms and scientific data, and of course the ever present "insider trading" white

collar criminals that parallel the big wheeler dealers like Donald Trump and Leona "only the little people pay taxes" Helmsley, who used Manhattan as their own ATM's and litter box, while thousands of the working poor slaved away in dead-end shit jobs, as crime and urban blight plagued many underserved neighborhoods and communities. This exacerbated the tensions between races and class to a no-win victim versus victim mentality and exercised through violence and vandalism throughout the boroughs. The city was rife with corruption from the "five families" of Italian/Sicilian mafia crime organizations that basically ran everything from vice, drugs, prostitution, bribery of every level of law enforcement to beat cops, judges and lawyers, underground gambling to private sanitation and vending machines. White collar criminals ran Ponzi schemes and made fortunes on gullible and greedy investors pawning off junk bonds and put options; The risk always quashed rewards.

Meanwhile, the entire economy of the working class was undercut and under siege as New York City faced wildcat strikes from sanitation workers and understaffed municipal city employees suffering fatigue from being overworked as the city loomed near bankruptcy in the early 1970's, but remarkably bounced back as the 80's rang in the era of Blue Chip and hedge fund Wall Street raiders that flooded the city with posh, decadent opulence. The Queens and Manhattan described in this account is not the same place in 2023, the locations are there, but the landscape, environment and emotional presence has been scrubbed clean and replaced with high dollar property and idealized corporate culture devoid of personality or proletarian imprints of families that resided in neighborhoods for several generations. This is a story of zones and districts, transformations, and erasure.

The music and themes of Helltown Incorporated were not intended to be a sonic journal or time capsule to preserve a romantic, or sentimental epoch of my life, or the people and adventures of my past. But, by default "*This Too Shall Pass*" stands as a personal testament to a unique period and place that is all but gone. If there are psychic "hauntings" of places and periods it exists in the time lapse of memory. The psychogeography of visited cities, environments, zones, and a mind map one retraces in stories, thoughts, and emotions. They are as real to us as romance, love, the

attachment of experiences, good, bad or otherwise to one's personal journey and journals that are not often shared to the public.

While writing this backstory for the history of Helltown Incorporated, it struck me how busy I was during the 80's into the 90's in the New York underground scene. From wanna-be conceptual artist, to roadie for punk legends Kraut, to booking agent for hardcore-metal crossover pioneers Leeway, to music critic and interview reporter for Guillotine and The Truth fanzines, to DJing at some of the hottest nightclubs in Manhattan at the time. These are not brags, but a humble acknowledgement for so many people who believed in my underused skill set. Without friends, partners and family, this life adventure may have folded after a season of effort and the tug of "mature adulthood" took front and center priority in my future.

This is an adventure story, as much as it is a recounting of moments and memories that occurred while attempting to be an artist, or musician, or DJ, or bandmate and even a bit actor as I tried on many hats while looking for my own stride and style in a city built on the past success of many others before me. As a reader/listener of the work presented by Helltown Incorporated, you always have the option to complete the art by delving in and absorbing, extracting and relating to the music and literature included in whatever capacity you feel comfortable with. You also have the option to stop, reject or dismiss the elements of Helltown Inc. entirely. No one can force another to accept or enjoy any work of art, music or literature, this is up to the receiver, the viewer, in short YOU. I rely upon you to give the story and music a chance to enlighten, engage and entertain you. The core history takes place in another time not too long ago to alienate the reader. The New York I write about is still there, more or less, but the drastic changes made by gentrification, concentrated wealth and is now populated by new, different people with drastically selfish agendas.

The Helltown I speak of is an amalgam of personal experiences that are part of my internal life, and the daily exploits of social interactions with friends, family, strangers and associates in an experiential exterior of landscapes and territories that make up a modern city. My attitude and behavior in this period of my life became intolerable to many close to me while being delusionally irreproachable while being

haughty and arrogant towards the people that I loved the most. I became my own worst enemy, and somewhat the creator of many of my own failures and frustrations as the CEO and Mayor of Helltown without recourse. Chalk it up as a learning curve of some life lesson but the worst was yet to come as Helltown Inc. was shelved in utter frustration and seething bitterness of the so-called Lower East Side/Soho art scenes, as I pursued the next project Final Solution with a vengeance that resulted in drug addiction, minor stints in jail for possession and ultimately two suicides of my friends and bandmates Chris Yustanich and Greg Scott.

This is NOT a tale of success, far from it. It is more a blueprint of personal growth and survival and some of the pitfalls, victories, and breakthroughs, however minor, that a face in the crowd, a one in a million-guy trying to be recognized, heard and seen by myopic, bustling world experienced while creating art and music in the sub-underground of Industrial/Experimental culture during the turbulent 80's. There were many pyrrhic victories where financial cost and physical effort went towards projects and goals with little or no gain, and the old standby of "art for art's sake" started to wear thin, yet my fool's errand motivation persevered and I continue to make art/noise/performance for no other reasons but for the love of the art and the people I've met.

One of the more important aspects of these liner notes is my personal relationship with my family. That hazy and uncertain part of life when a teenager takes on the roles of a functioning adult and how that played out while trying to be an inspiring artist, while balancing a relationship with my parents, especially my mother Kathleen and my brother Peter. Though I listened and followed many Industrial, sound and noise artists, I knew nothing of their family dynamics or youth while they grew from children to artists I respected. Many musicians and artists' stories start at their first "point of cool;" the time when their work is being recognized while never describing their upbringing or youth pre-art period in reviews or interviews. So, I decided to shed light on my early life and how I moved towards a style of art and music that is usually of a lurid and negative nature by shedding light of some of the darker, and taboo aspects of people and society.

As I try to veer from telling a hard told tale with a moral, or sentimental disclaimer of how not to behave toward others while trying to conduct the business of the act of creating art and music, the gravitas of the message I relay has its own force, its own energy that I hope is not lost on the impatient reader. And with that, the story I'm about to tell should stand either as a testimony to perseverance, or an immense yarn that should be shelved, traded for something better and cooler, and then landfilled with the latest trash. And like most rare artifacts, its fate is in the hands of the audience (you.) So, allow me to escort you through the muck and mire of a little-known place in Queens, New York I call Helltown.

NAME DROP SOUP

"When we remember something, we are taking bits and pieces from experience, sometimes from different times and places and bringing it all together to construct what we may feel is a recollection, but it's actually a construction."

– Dr. Elizabeth Loftus (Psychologist and false memory expert)

Throughout the period of Helltown Inc.'s activity, I encountered many people and characters in the underground scenes of Manhattan, New Jersey, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh. Some became longtime friends, others acquaintances and collaborators in art, video or music projects. Before the internet, making friends was organic exchange between people, usually through others with the same interests and goals. I decided to name some of the people and friends who were influential to Helltown Inc., and active in their own projects and artistic evolution.

There were in equal proportions, just as many assholes, shysters, time burners and arrogant fucks that never lifted a finger to help Helltown Inc. out. So, with some hesitancy and a little self-discipline, I decided not to name names of those I seethe with resentment for, or use this opportunity to slander or use decades of hindsight as lens of character judgment, instead I will lay out my personal story like a case history

and try to avoid future drama and blowback from my personal interactions and observations of my contemporaries be them friendly or not.

The underground in New York City in the late 70's into the 80's was made up of dozens of small social scenes that merged and interconnected through clubs, galleries, events and sometimes rallies for social change. It was welcoming and inclusive. For the most part there was no competitiveness, or ego exulting narcissistic ventures. Art and music venues were open to experimentation and friends supported friends by attending events and spreading the word. Sometimes the press in the form of fanzines, established magazines, the covered culture or an occasional Village Voice or New York Press freelance writer would pop up on good word and give exposure to new and cutting-edge artists and galleries.



Edward outside CBGB's, with Johnny Feedback (Kraut), Polly, and Rayco

Photo by Karen O'Sullivan, more information in "Hardcore High" chapter

As a multimedia project, Helltown Inc. were in the sub-underground category of tape artists, many of whom befriended me as I was coming up in the Industrial/Experimental ranks. By the early 80's dozens of new artists and labels began sprouting up across America, aided by the advent of the 4-track recording device, which made independent musicians and composers able to build affordable home studios and duplicate completed tapes without relying on professional sound and recording studios that can be rather expensive and pressuring to complete the recording on the time booked by the band or artist. The era of the 4-track recorder was displaced and eventually the advent of the personal computer became the home producers' tool of choice.

I started this chapter with a quote by Dr. Elizabeth Loftus, an American psychologist and leading expert in false memory and eyewitness evidence. She has worked on over 300 cases in criminal trials. That said, it would be impossible and flat out erroneous to say my recollection of events and situations is perfectly eidetic to the actual facts. However, it is with great earnestness and humility that I tell the most accurate story that my memory retains. I will try to be a reliable narrator and present the stories as clearly as I can remember them; my apologies for not recounting all events personal or otherwise in chronological order. It was a hectic era and I'm still reeling in the traces of my personal history.

A SIMPLE SUGGESTION

I'll presume the reader has internet service, or at least access to a computer. If there are any names, artists, terms, venues etc. that are unfamiliar to you, I suggest looking up and finding a trove of new information on many great characters, ideas, books, films, recordings, and history. As an artist coming out of the late 70's and working in the 80's when the internet was extremely limited, almost all my research into topics and contacts came from pilfering through hundreds of articles, ephemera, fanzines, library archives and shared word of mouth. You have it easy!

INSTRUMENT ONE

"Don't go away mad, just go away!"

– Sign in my grandfather's shop.

My grandfather, Alphonse Nervo worked for the Department of Housing Authority in New York City's "project" apartment complex in the South Bronx between 1969 and 1979. Before that he worked for the Bridge and Tunnel Authority as a toll booth officer on the Triborough Bridge which connects Queens, Manhattan and the Bronx. While my grandmother Josephine worked at a local A&P supermarket in the meat processing section as a butcher. As a child my grandmother would take me to the cutting room that overlooked the display of freshly cut beef and chicken for customers and showed me how the market made chop meat; I noticed large, flaked sawdust on the floors of the cutting room and freezers to sop up the blood and animal grit from trimming fat, bone and fleshy marbled prime from sides of skinned carcass. Grandma would take some chuck steak or flank and a chunk of fat cut from a bucket and place it in a large meat grinder while pushing down on the pile with a wooden pin while I sat on a butcher block. One of her co-workers put a jacket over my shivering shoulders to keep the blast of chiller air off me. She was a devout Catholic, but didn't enjoy going to church and never attended Sunday mass. But she did keep on her bedroom mantle a collection of miniature figurines and statues of saints Mary, Joseph and several crucifixes that were heirlooms from Italy.



A young man walks by some abandoned buildings at River Avenue and 163rd Street, in the South Bronx, 1979 (Joe Conzo Archives)

While working in the housing projects, my grandfather amassed a collection of appliances including radios, televisions, toaster ovens and tape recorders discarded by the residents of the building projects into the dumpsters through the trash chutes. After supper, he would go into his shop and tinker with the items, trying to repair the least of the damaged goods. Our family had a myriad of toasters, electric grills and hair dryers that were semi functional. Nobody had the heart to throw them away. I was attracted to the tape recorders and would play around with them as if they were toys. I started to record anything I liked, from the sound of my grandfather's table mounted electric filer, to various appliances like vacuums and fans, to the family car's motor. I also like to record dialog from television programs and my grandmother's voice. It was more of a hobby or game than any real interest in sound art, or engineering. I didn't know those discarded tape players found in dumpsters in Harlem and South Bronx would be the impetus of my journey into sound art and

save me from a rather unexamined life of drudgery and repressed bitterness in the afterthought of how it could've been.

For recreation, Alphonso went fishing off the Rockaway Bridge where we caught bottom feeder fish such as fluke and flounder. I once caught a full-size horseshoe crab. I examined it for hours, before my grandfather tossed it back into the drink. "You can't eat that!" Al said as he carried our catch in a spackle bucket back to the car. My grandfather gave me five pieces of advice to last me a lifetime:

1. Never argue with drunks or crazy people. (With no elaboration on how to identify "crazy!")
2. Don't associate with known drug takers or criminals.
3. If you have nothing good to say, keep quiet. (Especially around police or mobsters)
4. If it's not yours, do not touch it.
5. Get a job with the city.

It was simple common sense; he knew as I grew older, I would be facing a world and life that would not be as loving or supporting as family. I saw his disappointment with how working-class people were thought about and treated, he also lost faith in the "system" when president Richard Nixon was impeached and the Watergate scandal became public knowledge. He had no defining political leanings, his philosophy is if somebody takes on a job, they should do it to the best of their ability, but he also had a healthy distrust of lawyers and salesmen.

When my grandmother died at our Astoria home of emphysema she weighed 88 pounds, she was too weak to move to a proper hospital and we as a family couldn't afford a long-term stay. Josephine's death shattered my grandfather. He no longer went fishing, stood outside of the house to get air or clip roses growing in the front garden; within a year he was diagnosed with cancer, while in the hospital he wanted to shave to look more presentable and proud. But his blood platelet count was so low that every razor nick bled out, and by the end of the month he was deceased. My grandparents were my greatest influence and inspiration, they gave me love, hope and

moral support. I thank my grandfather for bringing home damaged and discarded tape recorders and teaching some mechanical and electrical repair basics in his workshop; you can hear the echoes of that in some of the tracks on "*This Too Shall Pass*".

I realized at an early age that the music I wanted to create was limited by traditional music parameters, and I had no inherited skill or talent. The sounds of machines and voices on radios or television had the same emotional quality as classical or jazz. I wanted to "tune" motors and wind-up toys to the same key as music my mother listened to. The dissonance and din of radios, televisions, and musical works like Igor Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* or the piano pieces by Erik Satie that I was exposed to gave me the impetus to start creating, or at least I could think that playing with my grandfather's tape recorders and old radio in his workshop were the steppingstones to Helltown Inc's beginning.

I would often watch PBS public television on channel 13 in New York/ New Jersey, with my grandparents or mother when she was available. The programming would often broadcast many performances by the New York Philharmonic, ballet, opera and stage productions. It was also home to children's programming that included Sesame Street, Zoom, 321 Contact, and The Electric Company. Occasionally the station would air avant-garde art movies like Jean Cocteau's 1946 film *Beauty the Beast*, *Blood of a Poet* from 1935 or Luis Bunuel's surrealist farce *L'Age d'Or* (The Golden Age). Documentaries highlighting art movements like the French impressionists or German Expressionists were also part of the schedule. One evening there was an episode on new, modern contemporary art. I remember seeing John Cage explaining a composition for prepared piano, and a brief mention of Luigi Russolo's "Intonarumori" sound constructions. The sounds were so similar to those in the workshop when my grandfather would tinker with appliances that it made a connection between music and mechanics.

My grandparents had no love for the surrealism of avant-garde music, but they tolerated my curiosity and watched along with me, Al sometimes cracking wise that "*I could do that*" in regard to some of the Jackson Pollack or John Cage clips. Sometimes he would bellow "*Bullshit!*" in the same baritone when a local politician

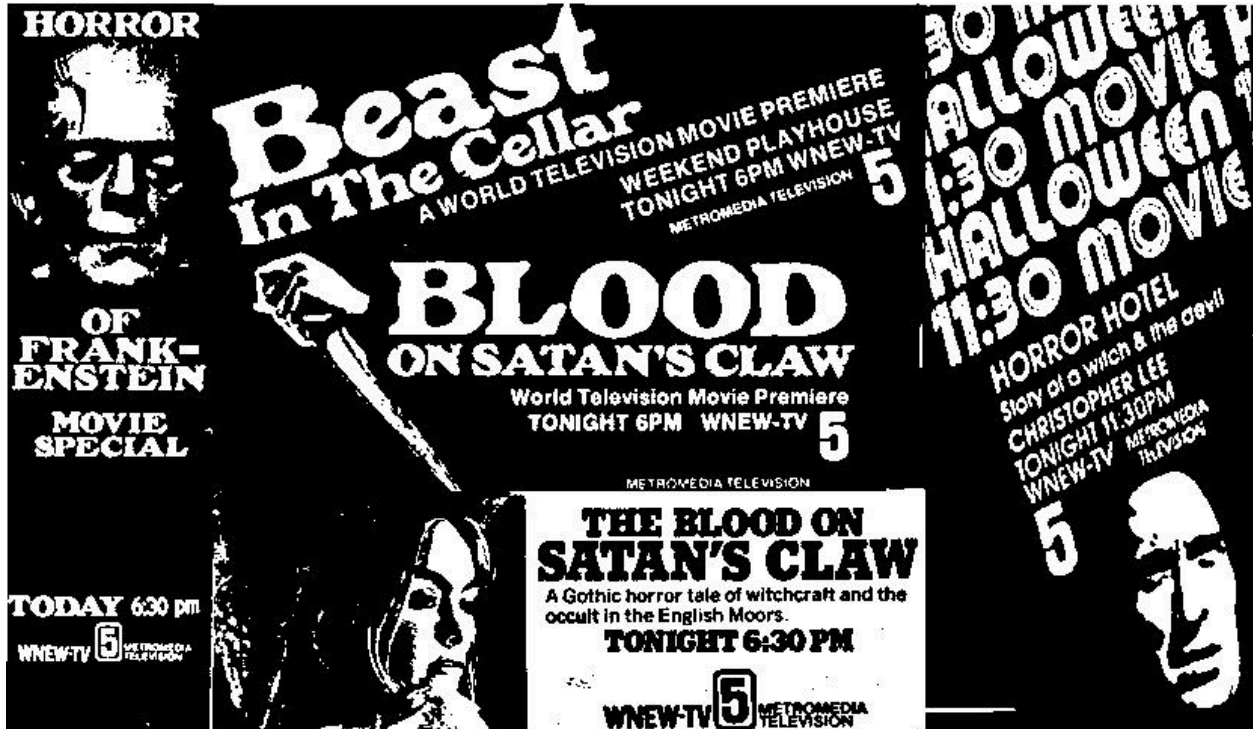
would give a press conference on TV. I loved his reaction to things and ideas that didn't pass the smell test, and by default became my favorite social critic. His gift of tape recorders, and transistor radio, put me on the path to explore the world of sound around me long before I considered anything I was doing art. Before art there was innocent fun, no pretense of demonstration of public approval. The days of innocence were winding up as I started to grow older and bitter truths started to make themselves apparent.

FEAR GRIPS THE CHILD

"We bury ourselves in fear!"

– Psychic TV, "Fear", 1985

The visceral feeling of fear was one of the first true stimulants of my youth. There were a few occasions that sudden shock or unexpected situations snapped me in a paralyzing terror shutting down the ability to react. The one that stands out was while watching Creature Feature horror movies on Channel 5 broadcasted a rerun of the 1958 B science fiction horror film, 'Fiend Without a Face.' The plot involves invisible aliens that visit a Canadian air force radar base attracted to and perhaps mutated by atomic energy radiation near the base site. The aliens inhabit the brains and spines that are now detached from of their victims, When the crawling spine/brain creatures start leaping attacks on confused and clueless guests and military personal, I totally lost it and ran shrieking into the bathroom, slammed the door hyperventilating while screaming in abject terror! My grandparents panicked and thought I was somehow seriously injured. They put me to bed and rolled the television set out of the room.



Print advertisements for "Creature Features" programs broadcast on Channel 5 - WNEW throughout the 1970's (Courtesy of Fred Adelman)

Between 1976 and August 1977, New York City was gripped in a paroxysm of terror by a serial killer first called the "44 Caliber Killer" who terrorized the boughs of Queens and the Bronx, shooting and killing random people with no clear pattern or motive. My grandmother was clearly distraught and afraid to keep the doors and windows open to alleviate the sticky, hot summer evenings, so grandfather reacted to this by pulling a bolt action rifle out of a closet, loaded and placed it behind his chair in the kitchen. "I want the bastard to come here," he said while pointing at his forehead. "Right between the eyes!" We waited together like sentries at a fort waiting for "Son of Sam" to make his appearance. In this timeframe both the New York City blackout of and Elvis Presley's death occurred and they seemed symbolically linked to the David Berkowitz reign of terror and Nancy Spungeon's murder that led to Sid Vicious suicide in 1979. The whole sweep of tragic events culminated in the murder of John Lennon on the night of December 8th 1980. New York City was reeling from a gut punch that resonated for months by the delusional *Catcher in the Rye* toting Mark David Chapman.

All the while, I recorded any news on television on the tape recorders my grandfather gifted me from the projects. I liked the seriousness of the newscaster's dramatic narration; it reminded me of the Vietnam war and when the Watergate scandal broke and my grandfather's focus on local and national news. VCRs and Betamax were just hitting the market and were very expensive, and no one in my family saw the need to collect anything on TV for prosperity, repeats were good enough.

Traditional horror movies and the space opera adventure yarns were replaced with dystopian themes found in *Soylent Green* from 1973, the creepy automaton replacement story of 1975's *The Stepford Wives* and later in the more humorous and campier *They Live* from 1988. There was also a variety of the evil corporate thriller/dramas 1976's *Network*, The uncanny beauty creations of *Looker* from 1981, *Coma* from 1978, as well as *The Manchurian Candidate* and the black humor of *Dr. Strangelove* that tackled the military-industrial complex and fears surrounding the threat of brainwashing, deprogramming and all out atomic bomb annihilation.

I read these films, as well as others, as prophetic and challenging the black hole of information only found in investigative journalism or in-depth studies by academics or social scientists. The classic paranoid "us against them" mentality is rife in science fiction novels and translates well on screen as low ball propaganda from an industry that doesn't inform rather but entertains the audience en masse. As I matured and sought new streams of opinion, there were textbooks, fanzines, and publishing houses such as Semiotext(e) that were not only informing me but showing me what I should be concerned about. My fears were justified and displayed before me like kangaroo court evidence in a world built of hypocrisy, apocryphal citations, and baseless canards.

My aesthetic goals were still years away, but even as a kid I wanted whatever music or art I pursued to be a reflex from fear whether externally from positive stimulus or from the anxiety and dread I expected to encounter from the world at large as I grew into adulthood and became more aware of danger and suspicion of others instability. The risk of trouble was by default always at the heart of every situation where danger

became surreal, and things just seem to happen in a miasma of mayhem, frenzy and chaos. Boredom was the enemy, creating was a defensive strategy.

RADIO & RECORDS

My three favorite records as a young child were *Bridge Over Troubled Water* by Simon and Garfunkel, *The Point* by Harry Nilsson which was a story about a boy who lived in a land where everyone had a pointed head and his dog named Arrow, and a Spiderman "Rockcomic" on the Buddha record label that retold the origins of Peter Parker and his alter-ego Spiderman from 1972.

The radio was my go-to best friend, it fed me news and information, music and dramatic musings in the form of dramatized theatre. Shows like Johnny Dollar and The Shadow were still in syndication and

Pizzerias throughout the boroughs blaring out popular classics such as "Sheery Baby", "Help Me Rhona" and other hits out of tinny sounding radios usually tuned to WABC's (AM770) "Cousin Brucie" Morrows show.

While shopping for house items with my mother, I bought with allowance money the *Electronic Meditation* album by Tangerine Dream at a Korvette's in Queens purely out of curiosity. There was a balloon attached to the front cover and it looked oddly out of place among the adult contemporary recording artists and lame FM rock selections. In 1978, I also purchased The Residents *Fingerprince* and Robert Fripp and Brian Eno's *No Pussyfooting* experimental explorations based strictly on the album cover designs. It was a trifecta of great cutting-edge music that became a preliminary of other adventurous records I would hunt down or stumble upon purely at random or happenstance while rifling through record bins across Greenwich Village and Soho.



Flushing Korvette's on Opening Day, 1974-11-01, Long Island Daily Press

THE BEIGE YEARS

"Me and you and a dog named Boo."

– Lobo (Kent LaVoie, 1971)

My mother Kathleen and I lived off Ditmars Boulevard in the heart of Astoria Queens for the first few years of life between 1966 and 1969. The apartment had all the trappings of the 60's *modern pad* replete with macramé plant hangers, a wine

bottle with an elongated neck and bead separators that hung between rooms. Her besties were Nanette, Cecilia, and "Little" John who had big frizzy hair, wore fringes and a headband. One afternoon, my mom and her friends drove out to Flushing Meadow Park with a picnic basket and a large colorful blanket. I had no idea we were headed to see The Doors and The Who in concert. All I remember was my mom and her friends dancing to "Light My Fire." It was Ray Manzaraek's keyboard solo and Jim's chant of "*Come on baby light my fire, try to set the night on fire!!*" that I identified from the countless times I heard it on the radio or stereo when records were played. My mother's record collection was an impressive and diverse example of modern jazz, pop and rock with some movie soundtracks thrown in.

After my mother's divorce, we moved upstairs from my grandparent's house about a mile from the old apartment. I spent a lot of time with them as my mom worked full time and started to date my future step-father Walter whom she met through a mutual friend. The house was under the "el." Short for elevated train rails for the MTA mass transit system. Our stop was 30th Grand Avenue and our house was just below the stop's platform. One morning from my bedroom window, I saw my grandfather standing in the street in front of the house holding up the traffic, he was wearing his dark blue work uniform. He yelled up to my mother, "*Throw down a blanket!*" My mother grabbed the comforter of my bed and tossed it to my grandfather. When I went downstairs, I saw a woman in a green coat lying in the street. Apparently, she fell or jumped from the train platform and fell through the wooden track ties to the street below. My grandfather took my comforter and covered her lifeless body as the police patrol car and ambulance slowed to a halt.

As the gurney was rolled into the back of the ambulance, my grandfather handed the comforter back to my mom who went back upstairs and remade my bed. From that point on in my childhood, I always thought the spirit or essence of the dead woman was in my comforter. I would constantly check under the covers and bed to see if I could spot her. My grandmother and mother would sometimes talk about the Holy Spirit as some Catholics do. So, I figured this idea also pertained to any garden variety mortal as well (why only Jesus, saints, and all the Bible characters?) – it spooked me out for the rest of my youth.

It was my mother Kathleen who exposed me to culture, visits to all of the major museums, the Central Park Zoo, Carnegie Hall and the Broadway theater district. I disliked the big song musicals like *Hello Dolly* and *Oklahoma!* but I never complained. I preferred the dramas *Death of a Salesman*, and *All my Sons* in particular – I connected with the tragedy of the family in the Post World War Two fallout as the American dream of prosperity and hope slipped further away from our own modest way of life.

My daily wardrobe consisted of corduroy slacks, sweaters in any weather, hoodies and Wallaby "Chukka" shoes from Thom McCan, which I wore until the sole split and they walked and talked.



A portrait of the artist as a young man, early 1970's

Walter became my stepfather and joined our family with aspirations of being a graphic artist in the comic book industry. He owned a good-sized home studio including a drafting table, lamp and a professional "Lucy" magnifying machine for

blowing up images. I was impressed with his talent as he showed me storyboards and paste-ups where finished inked panels were cut by hand with a razor and glued in sequence to the text and characters dialog. Some of the magic of comics was exposed, but it was great to see the real work to create illustrated comic art. Walter's nickname as a teenager around Long Island City was "Tarzan" for his agility and climbing up trees, rooftops and running speed, and was a reader of action novels especially Robert E. Howard, creator of Conan the Barbarian and Edgar Rice Burroughs of Tarzan fame. One afternoon, Walter was showing his artwork to someone with long corkscrew hair and wearing a robe-like dress; I later found out it was Vaughn Bode the famous underground comic artist, creator of Belinda Bump, Cheech Wizard, and a major influence on hundreds of graffiti artists throughout the world. These little brushes with the famous would be enough to keep Walter interested in pursuing his dream, he held on for a decade before he packed up his art studio and never returned to art.

I think it crushed Walter to put his ink pen down and drift towards normal hourly work, he started moonlighting driving a taxicab that made him edgy and quick-tempered; he eventually became a token booth clerk for the MTA before an attempted mugging almost turned into assault with a deadly weapon when Walter fought back and stabbed his attacker. He was given severance pay and asked to leave. We never warmed up to one another and this made for tension throughout our lives resulting in a jittery nervousness that affected my mother and I; we both found ways to occupy downtime with a non-stop list of chores and tasks to avoid seeming lax or lazy.

I can thank Walter for teaching me two essentials: how to shave without cutting my face to shreds, and how to make a perfect Half-Windsor necktie knot, two things that I still use to this day. I also owe my step-father a bit of gratitude for bringing me to Comic-Con conventions held in ballrooms and meeting halls at the Sheraton Hotel in midtown Manhattan. Around 9pm the stragglers would flood into a side banquet room for screenings of rare and classic Science Fiction movies and trailers shown from a noisy 16-millimeter projector with lousy sound. Most of the audience were stoned and rowdy. We watched *Zardoz* with Sean Connery, and student spoof *Dark Star* by director John Carpenter (both from 1974), which

brought heckling from the stoner space cadets! I felt we were in a private club of cool, a devoted audience of thinkers, writers, and cultural outliers. The screening lasted past midnight and it was taboo for me to be out and up past my typical bedtime. Walter broke the rules sometimes and gave me a privy into a subculture that I gravitated to as a community.

The 1970's was a particular era for what is known in the broadcasting industry as MOR (Middle of the Road) adult contemporary music that dominated both AM/FM stations and was commonly accepted as part of popular culture widely accepted by both the music industry and the listening audience that made up consumers of records and hi-fi appliances such as stereos and 8-track players.

If music has an influence on emotions, I will say that the soft rock/singer songwriter sound of the 70's was some of the most depressing music I personally ever listened to. Though meant to be romantic or reminiscing about past love or relationships, most of the songs were about failure, loss and even suicide and death without being overtly explicated in lyrical verse. Songs like "Seasons In The Sun" by Terry Jacks, "Wildfire" by Michael Martin Murphy, "Alone Again, Naturally" by Gilbert O'Sullivan were prima facie sad topics for popular songs poetically describing abnormally grievous scenarios in light rock vein.

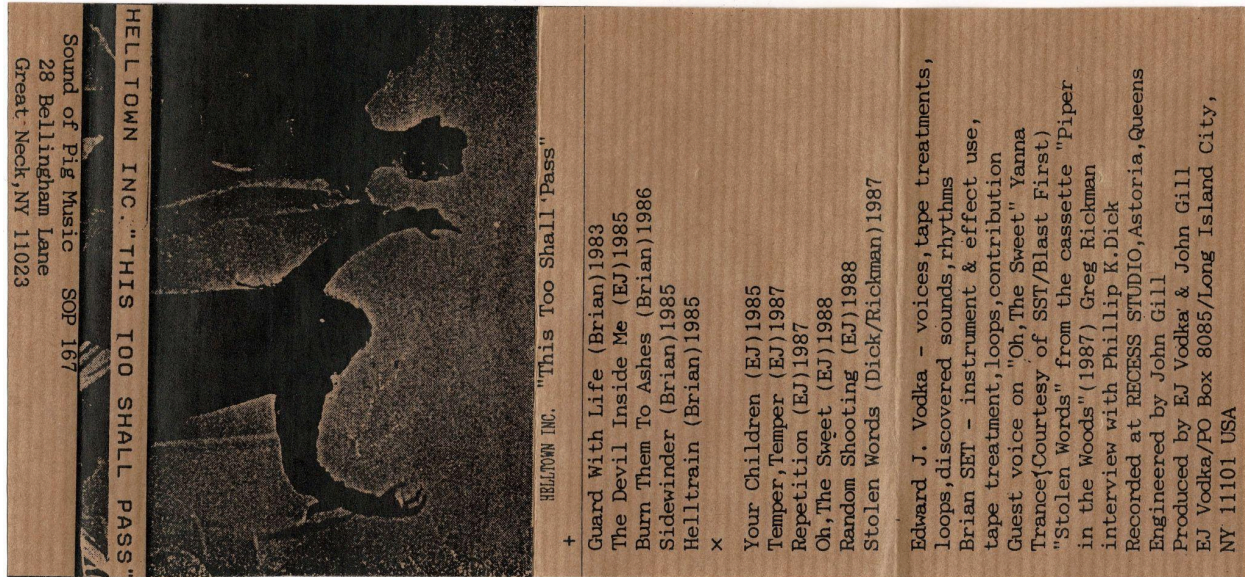
While driving around with my parents in the backseat of a brown colored hatchback exposed me to hours of radio on and exposed me to a lot of terrible moods and feelings. The playlists of mid to slow tempo easy rock and somewhat melancholy songs had a toll on my overall mental health, it wasn't as much the melancholy, or tone of the songs as it was sentiment of the lyrics, the doom of what adults, the grown-ups dealt with, and the helpless feeling of not being able to escape future situations made my stomach fall and I started to withdraw from a lot of socializing from all people and peers, I didn't want to deal or cope with a collective grief from unfulfilled dreams or unrequited love. During holidays or family get-togethers, Walter's sisters usually played Heart, Elton John, Fleetwood Mac and ABBA while Billy Joel and Bruce Springsteen were the pick on my aunt Rose Ann and cousins' side as the family drank and talked after dinner.

I started to relate this music to a sense of background soundtrack to the family, so I was no stranger to modern popular rock music. I'm always fascinated by the lengths artists go to deny, or ignore their family interactions, or their exposure to popular culture before they are known by the public. The irony of rejecting seemingly uncool culture while trying to build *art cred* is as old as it is funny. So many artists and musicians I've met flatly denied their past to be discussed or exposed as if they were born straight to art.

The 70's were also an era of serial killer's esoteric cults, and disaster movies; one can only imagine Ted Bundy, Edmund Kemper or Hurbert Mullen humming along with John Denver's, "*You fill up my senses,*" while death cruising for the next victim. Cults like The People's Temple, Branch Davidians, and Heaven's Gate were already recruiting new disciples. All three would make world news as the Eschatological delusions engulfed the leader's paranoid delusions and brought suicidal violence to them and their followers.

My mother worked at a company called Executone which made telephone parts and communication systems for offices. The giant five story building was within a convenient and safe walking distance from our house. By 1984 Executone was in the process of moving out of Long Island City and trying to liquidate their office furniture and machines. Mom was able to procure an IBM Sselectric ii Typewriter (the same machine I used to type up the original 1988 liner notes for "*This Too Shall Pass*"). It became the most valuable piece of equipment I owned: I used it throughout Helltown Inc. and Final Solution's history. A local office supply store had both ribbons and a rubber stamp service where the first "Mind Over Matter" imprint was ordered. The neighborhood seemed to have everything needed to start an Industrial-Experimental project; it was just a matter of putting all of the desperate pieces together and manifesting them into art/music/film/text.

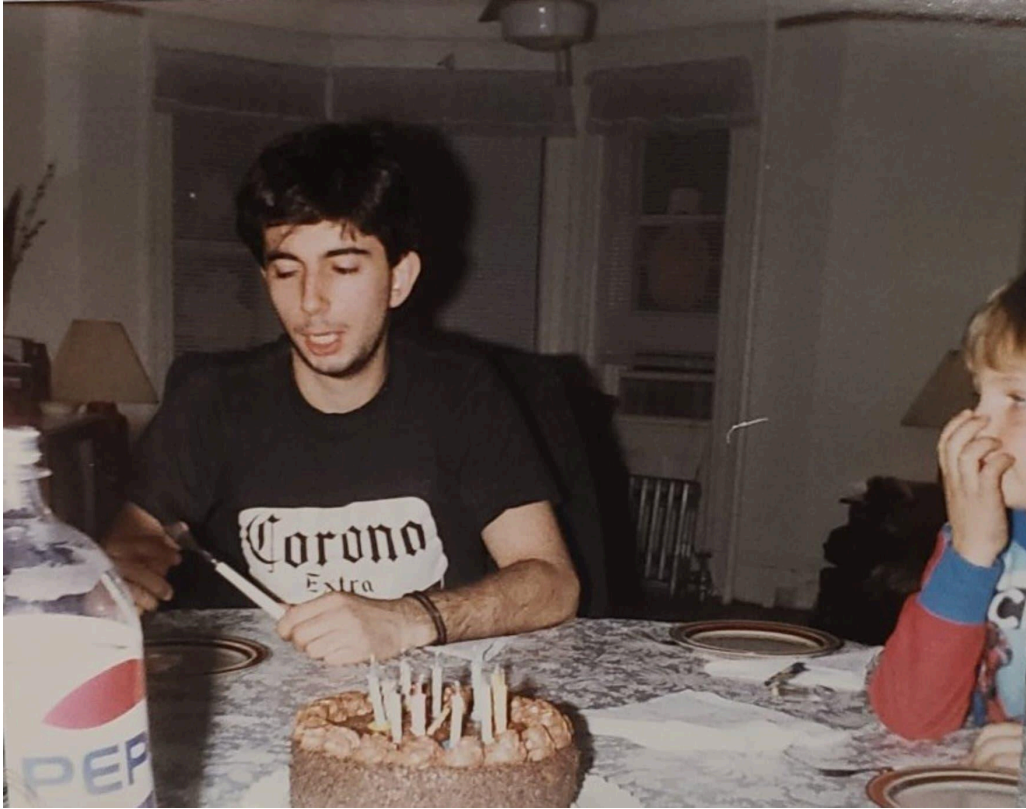




Helltown Inc. (SOP 167), liner notes written on IBM Sselectric ii Typewriter

Scan courtesy of Nick Zablocki / Active Abuse

September 20th is one of the happiest days of my life: my brother Peter was born two decades after me and brought a joy to my mother that I hardly witnessed. He was baptized and welcomed into the family with all the love and expectations parents and siblings could. As he grew from toddler to boy, we became pals; I watched professional wrestling and let him play with my music gear. I took him out whenever I could. I usually tagged along if my mother and Pete visited museums or the Central Park Zoo. We bonded over Pee-Wee's Playhouse on Saturday morning television and professional wrestling in the afternoons. Sunnyside Gardens was still holding wrestling bouts, but my mother refused to allow me to bring Peter to see pro wrestling live. Notorious grapplers like Bruno Samartino, Larry Zibisko, Bob Backland and the villainous Executioners that double teamed their opponents any chance available! Peter's birth solidified the family and changed our overall attitude as a family unit, he brought joy and happiness to Walter, my mom and me. We were all happy for the same reason at the same time. We were complete.



Edward and his brother Pete, circa 1990

Meanwhile, a group of students fresh out of the Rhode Island School of Design took up residence in a brick furniture factory building on 44th Drive about a block from the East River. They made art and played music at CBGB's and they called their band Talking Heads. I would see Tina, Chris and David often walking past my friends Jarv's building to the E or F subway lines to the city, or at PS-1 browsing new exhibits. Michigan native and Rock guitar legend Wayne Kramer from the MC-5 also lived in the neighborhood for a short time in the late 70's. There was something brewing just below the grit and desolation of the neighborhood, there were sparks of creative energy just below the factories and rundown park where we used to play. The other side of the bridge and tunnel was alive.

WKCR 89.9 on the far left of the FM dial broadcasts some of the most *out* and historic jazz recordings including hard bop and free improvisation that verged on noise. But, in the evening a program called "Transfigured Night" came on air, and for five hours explored the deepest recesses of experimental, musique concrete, sound

poetry, and cutting edge academic new music. The show was a universe with long sets of complex sonic compositions by Pauline Oliveros, Iannis Xenakis and Gyorgy Ligeti, next to harsh Post-Industrial artists such as Borbetomagus, Merzbow, Asmus Tietchens, Swimming Behavior of the Human Infant. The host was never intrusive and only a few times throughout the show interrupted the sets to rundown what artists and pieces were played. One of the standout pieces from one of the shows was Pierre Henry's "Variations For A Door And A Sigh," and some sound poetry that completely blew me away as far as what composed sound can be.

Punk rock, along with the avant-garde compositions I heard on college radio, was my way out of the mundane, claustrophobic, and stifling period of the 70's. Goodbye ABBA, hello anarchy!

TIMBER LAKE CAMP (EIGHT WEEKS OF THE GRATEFUL DEAD, BOB DYLAN, AND JORMA)

"Art is the perpetual motion of illusion; the highest purpose of art is to inspire."

– Bob Dylan

"Well if I live tomorrow, like I'm living today. There ain't no way to borrow, look for me to stay!"

– Hot Tuna, "Funky #7", circa 1975

In the summer of 1976, my mother sent me to camp for eight weeks to get me out of the city. I was game. My experiences at CYO (Catholic Youth Organization) day camp from the summers before was a terrible experience as inner-city urban kids from different neighborhoods were integrated and sent to Whitestone pool or Flushing Meadow Park in rented school buses with little or no oversight or management from the counselors that were either retired NYPD living off pensions

and picking up extra income, or clergy brothers trying to mentor the more at risk youth in our troop.

There was full scale bullying and abuse in the age/size hierarchy of power. To call it hazing would romanticize the misleading concept that it was all in good fun and formed some lifelong bond through physical and emotional taunting. This was gang-up beatings of singled-out kids that were defenseless and screaming for help while our counselors barely interfered, too busy making phone calls or reading the horse racing forums. Charley Horse punches to the arms or thighs and pile-ons were a constant regiment by the bigger goon, roughneck kids. I basically had to fight back and find alliance with some of the others to prevent getting jumped on.

It was at camp where my first sense of real hatred for people started to grow; I hated every fucking thing about these kids and the lazy cop-counselors. I hated the swimming pool out in Whitestone Queens, all the activities offered by the camp, the bus ride and the box lunches. After this ordeal, I suggested to my mother that she either find another summer camp or not count on me to go every day; I'd rather spend the summer in the streets, or at the park up the block, at least I could go back home if a fight occurred.

There was one kid at CYO who seemed to be the alpha-male of the lot over the other younger kids. He was called by his last name "Posaur" or some iteration of that. He was bigger and more brazen than any of the others. One day, out of nowhere, he put me in a choke hold and threw me to the ground. I got up in a threatening manner, pissed off that I was grabbed with my back turned. "What? Come on!," he yelled at me, I let it go. That's when I tried to spend time away from other kids on the parked yellow school buses that escorted the camp to various locations for activities. I wasn't scared of this asshole, I just didn't want trouble. The counselors didn't mind as it was one less punk to supervise. I decided to inspect the bus, I noticed the rear emergency exit hatch door on the rear of every bus. Surprisingly, it was shut, but not locked. My assumption was they would be left unsecure in the event of an accident if the passengers had to make a quick effort off the bus. I tested it and with a shoulder check, the door popped open. I tried it several times, then sat down to read a newspaper a driver left behind on a seat. When the bus loaded up with staff and

campers, it started off out of the parking area, the turns lurched us left, then right. "Posuar" or whatever his name was started harassing kids for lunch money, or anything he felt had value like a baseball mitt. I was sitting in the last seat watching this jerk-off threatening kids pacing the middle aisle of the bus while a few of his cronies watched on.

Our eyes locked, perhaps for a beat too long. "What are you looking at?" I responded: "You! Asshole. You ain't shit. Sit down, you're a hazard to the driver!" He froze as if he couldn't believe what he heard. He lunged at me, I stood up quickly and popped the rear door open and with the help of inertia, tossed him out of the back of the bus, which was traveling about ten miles per hour. "Posaur" bounced on the black top asphalt and laid there. "Whoa! Whoa! Stop the bus! Somebody fell out of the back door!" I heard one of the counselors yell at the driver. The driver and counselors poured out of the bus, one of them frantically looked for a payphone. Some time went by and an ambulance arrived, the paramedics placed the asshole on a gurney that was hoisted through the open doors of the ambulance and pulled away. The counselors were standing around about fifty feet from our bus in a semicircle, the head of the camp kept looking back towards us, and I had the feeling they were suspicious of how this happened. Some of the kids stared at me, I knew this would give me away, but I just sat there looking unconcerned.

The leader of CYO camp was either a retired cop, or a veteran looking forward to retirement. Grey receding hairline, big shouldered, gut. He walked toward the rear of the bus where I was sitting. "Did, ah anybody see what happened," he asked in a general way. "Posuar fell out of the bus!" one kid said. "Yeah, we know that, how did that happen?" A few comments and theories were offered up to assuage the situation. "We're going to get to the bottom of this sooner or later, I know that door just didn't pop open by itself, somebody either opened it or pushed it open, but either way John was thrown outta the back of the bus." He paused before he said. "That's criminal assault, a felony." He looked at all of us nodding as we looked back at him, silent and motionless.

It took a week before someone gave me up, since there were no viable witnesses and no surveillance cameras on school buses at that time, the only action taken was a

telephone call to my mother explaining why I couldn't return to camp; she appreciated having the remaining fee returned. "We can use the money," she said without questioning me about the event. So much for the Catholic Youth Organization! What bothered me most was my lack of care for the bully I tossed off the bus, and my lack of concern for possible criminal charges for assault, I simply didn't sweat it. I felt somewhat guilty for not feeling guilty. I knew then that I had to find empathy or compassion soon, otherwise I'd act without remorse in future situations. Perhaps it was wrong to handle the bullying in such a drastic and dangerous manner, I felt like my own personal hero, and I wasn't going to let some dickhead's hospital visit rob that from me; he had it coming as far as I was concerned.

The next year I attended Timber Lake Camp, located at the foot of the Catskill Mountains about 2 and a half hours from New York City. The first week at camp was a little alienating and I was acclimating to new people and a new environment. But it didn't take long to notice the other campers were middle class and predominantly stoners deeply fanatical with the music of The Grateful Dead, Bob Dylan and Jorma Kaukonen/Hot Tuna. This also included fandom of The Band, Neil Young, Crosby Stills & Nash. While there was some structure to activities and skill building exercises such as sports and woodworking, most of the bunker counselors hung out, smoked pot and played acoustic guitars if not listening to hours of Dead, Dylan or Hot Tuna bootleg tapes. I avoided most of the activities like swimming or tetherball, and basically walked around the facility making friends with the easier going kids and faculty that didn't mind my free roaming as long as I showed up at morning, joined the cabin at the mess hall for meals and evening rollcall to keep count of all campers and staff, other than that I was on my own.

My knowledge of the Grateful Dead was limited: I knew the band had an immense following in the Tri-State area and Upstate New York since the sixties and usually played multiple nights at Nassau Coliseum and Madison Square Garden where thousands of Dead Heads would flock to see the band and take up camp in a mass pilgrimage around midtown Manhattan; it was quite a freak scene. My mom had the



For historical purposes: Timber Lake Camp, 1978 (Edward went in 1977)

‘American Beauty’ record, but it was mellow sounding and I barely played it on the stereo. I asked some of the bootleg collectors in our cabin to play earlier shows from 67-69 when Anthem of the Sun/Pigpen era which I knew to be the Dead’s most exploratory and psychedelic. Music and lyric books by Robert Hunter, Neil Young and the Rolling Stones were scattered around the cabin along with issues of National Lampoon, Hunter S. Thompson and Kurt Vonnegut Jr. paperbacks. Some of the older staff knew a bit of the folklore around The Merry Pranksters, Ken Kesey and Neil Cassidy and the trip bus, FURTHER. Conversations would often drift into friendly debates about the legitimacy of Thomas Woolf’s novel “The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test,” or if “The Armies of the Night,” by Norman Mailer, had any real social impact on its generation. It was pretty heady stuff for me, no one my age or back home ever discussed books, music or art the way they did, it was one of many teachable moments. I was out of the comfort zone of my home.

One of the most enlightening things that happened at camp was open discussions with several counselors and my cabin mates about Jews and Judaism. The majority of the camp both staff and attendees, were Jewish. I didn't catch on until the second Friday when I noticed many of the kids were going up to the dining hall for Shabbat dinner. Our chats were very straightforward and comfortable: what are the major holidays, the Hanukkah miracle of the oil, what the Menorah represents: "you know the candleholder you see sometimes." I told them none of this was mentioned in Catholic school, that Judaism isn't even mentioned in class, or by the priests, the Jesus was Jewish dilemma, why are we Catholic? It was presented easily: "Don't get too bent outta shape about these things, ultimately, we're all children of God, if you believe in that, otherwise it doesn't matter, it's like asking questions about the origin of the universe. Service has a lot to do with the religious aspects, depending how devoted you are to it, the orthodox are a trip, I'm your run-of-the-mill Jew from Long Island, I'm sure we have a relative I've never met." I asked about Kibbutz, "That's pretty fun, it's communal living in Israel, you meet family, talk to Rabbis, help the poor, then you chill out, float around in the Dead Sea, sight see, it's not all work." "I knew you weren't Jewish," One of the counselors said openly in front of the others. "What gave it away," I asked. My bunkmate left on a tone of, "Well, it takes one to know one." And left it at that.

After these conversations, I felt very unworldly and limited in my scope of knowledge and life experiences, I didn't know any Jewish, Arab, Asian Indian, or even indigenous Americans. I never traveled abroad nor spoke a language other than English. The camp and its staff were from a different class and education than mine, the more I listened, the more I learned about the true middle class, not the presumed idea my family had and falsely identified with; it exposed the truth that we aspired, yet never fully achieved the status of being from the middle class of American society. I had the desire to meet different types of people, new ideas and ways of life. This was perhaps the start of expanding my horizons past what limitations my personal social circle did not include.

For seemingly open-minded, stoner-hippie types, most of the kids and staff were closed to anything not of a particular type of classic American rock. I was chastised

with snark for defending Alice Cooper, Iggy Pop and the Tubes. They weren't interested in glam, prog, or hard rock, as they showed great enthusiasm for the announcement of Ronnie Wood's New Barbarian's North American tour coming up in a few months. On talent night, the older counselors put on a variety show that included Saturday Night Live inspired skits, juggling, and a break-dancer. The show always concluded with a live music jam covering Bob Dylan, Jorma/Tuna and you guessed it... The Grateful Dead!

What I learned from the stoner Dead & Dylan heads at Timber Lake was how loyal their association was with the band and the whole tribe vibe of traveling, camping out while setting up an open market for everything from food to clothing to tantric healing and yoga. The Dead Head parking lot scene was its own economy, close to a third of the crowd stayed in the parking lot playing frisbee and hacky sack or making kind veggie burritos of tofu and brown rice while the band played in the arena. No other band I know had this ritualized celebration, and devout loyalty since the mid-sixties. From the Grateful Dead, I learned a committed work ethic, here's a band that spends close to eleven months on the road touring, clocking in three-to-four-hour concerts for decades. Say what you will about the Dead's music, or their LSD drenched, free loving followers, they did life as a rock n roll band on their terms and ignored trends and critics, and amassed a loyal cult following while making a healthy profit.

The Catskills are a bucolic, scenic area of upstate New York, many in the five boroughs have a second summer home upstate or retire north of the city to get away from the density and day-to-day beatdown living in New York City can administer decade after decade. But, for me, an open fire plug is a babbling brook, the skyline of project housing were summit peaks of constructed mountains, to get to the rooftops was equal to scaling the Matterhorn. I need a city to survive, to grow, to exist. I can appreciate a break from the constant now of city life, but by the fourth week, I was homesick for my mother and the house cat, the cyclone fences and scurry of rats near the East River pier of Long Island City. I wrote a few letters home and started to cross off the days of a calendar counting down the re-entry to Queens. I started school in September and scanned the Village Voice club section. So many bands and

venues, I only knew the Ramones, Dead Boys, Sex Pistols, The Clash, Damned and Stranglers from singles and any press I could find buried between the excess attention other rock bands were getting in Rolling Stone, Creem or Circus magazines. CBGB's had live music seven nights a week, but it was too late in the evening for me to go alone. My stepfather was willing to take me, but I declined. I stayed close to the neighborhood cranking up my tapes and walked the straight line of students; the time to explore the nightlife was inevitable.

H IS FOR HALDOL, H IS FOR HELL

"Very early in life, it was already too late."

– Elizabeth Wurtzel, *Prozac Nation*

It was around this time that I started having difficulty in school. In 7th grade, over a period, I would have recurring looping thoughts and couldn't concentrate in class. I also became increasingly aggressive due to my inability to focus; at first my mother sent me to a child psychologist and a clinic with other children with learning difficulties. The clinicians tried some biofeedback techniques and relaxation exercises which were popular, and mom suggested meditation and mindfulness which was probably out of a magazine article. Walter however used more direct and threatening methods when it came to falling grades which made me a nervous wreck. I was scared to discuss my mental situations and started to dwell on many insecurities.

After several visits to the hospital and some psychological testing, it was suggested we employ a private psychiatrist that can start a routine visiting schedule and record any changes or progress of my condition. Through the hospital reference we were given a doctor's name who sees patients at his home office in the Forest Hills neighborhood of Queens.



Bedford Ave, Brooklyn in the 1980's, photo taken by Edward's cousin Joseph Vega

On our first visit, the doctor prescribed Haldol 20 milligrams which we picked up at the local pharmacy. After adherence to my dosage and the persistence of my cognitive condition, my brain started to freeze up as if I was in a flat-affect trance, those looping thoughts were now replaced with a deep, empty zone without emotion or constituted cognitive thoughts or ideas. In all honesty it made me a medicated zombie, replete with jerk-spasms that made me fidgety. I also gained thirty or so pounds, another side effect of Haldol, so I felt overweight and in a fucking trance for a year of my life. I became withdrawn and stopped going out to socialize with friends. I took to wearing my school uniform of gray slacks, a white button-down shirt, sweater with a school insignia patch sewn to the chest and a cheap stained clip-on tie and preferred the uniform over my casual clothes. I stayed home over the weekends and read books rather than playing outside. I felt like a subject in a strange

neurological experiment like a plot from a bad futuristic science-fiction movie, and I wanted to reflect that by alienating from most of my routine interests. In fact, I started to dislike most people and became suspicious of everyone whether I knew them or not. I felt totally detached from normalized interpersonal situations and avoided others as much as I could.

I never blamed my mother for going the path of therapy and medication, she was concerned and didn't want me to fall behind in my schoolwork. When I transferred over to St Anthony's in Greenpoint Brooklyn after St. Mary's shut down, the principal decided to place me back to 6th grade because I wasn't ready for my classes. It was a blow to my mother and I felt dumb and inadequate to be one year older and one year behind the other kids in school. Manic and extreme sudden depression has challenged me my entire life. I've had to either avoid stressful triggers or just ignore them and carry on with whatever I was doing. I needed something that could help with those bad times and spoke to me directly.

However, I did resent my aunt Rose and eventually my own mother claiming I was acting out for attention. They didn't realize just how bad my reactions were to trauma or stress. From my teenage years on it was as if all experiences were being filtered through a misery effect pedal turned up to ten. My mother often told me I had a defeatist attitude which would be troubling for me as I got older. By the time I was fifteen or so, I coped by reading and other solitary outlets. I was attracted to the short parables of Robert Walser, Franz Kafka, Saki and Herman Hesse and I especially enjoyed the quirky short stories by German writer Heinrich Boll, while the music of sub-strata of the underground such as Amor Fati, Function Disorder, Enstruction, Die Form and Vagina Dentata Organ, Z'EV, Bohack (featuring a young Vincent Gallo), Zurich 1916, Crawling Chaos, Crispy Ambulance and Policeband, were purchased from a select few record shops in lower Manhattan.

"JARV"

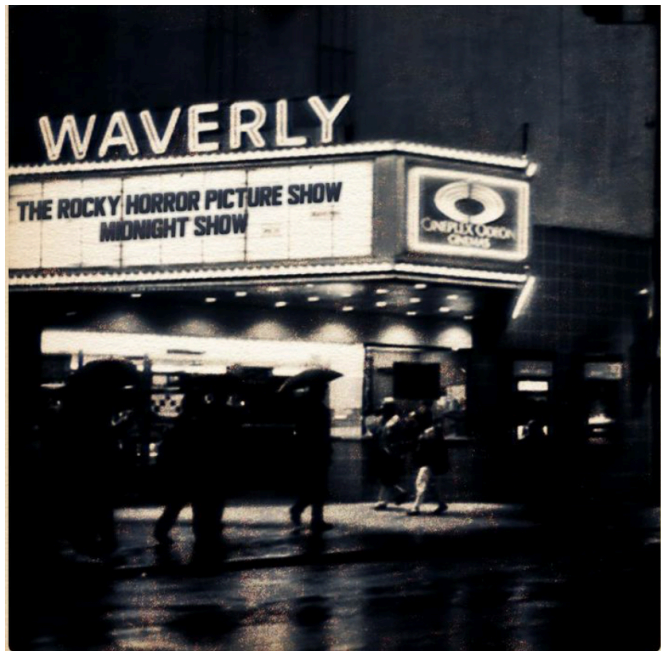
Javier aka "Jarv" (no last name) was my closest friend while growing up in Long Island City. He was also my greatest influence outside of my family. We became fast friends after we talked about comics, science fiction and art at the neighborhood park. One day I saw Jarv walking with his artist portfolio case, a metal T-square sticking out of the top. He was coming back to the city, and invited me up to his apartment where he lived with his parents and two brothers. Jarv, and his older brother Henry were always at the park, or down Court Square, a dead end street adjacent to the courthouse. It was the best place to play touch football if the parking lot of PS-1 was being occupied.

Jarv gifted me the Ramones 'Rocket to Russia' and many experimental records including Test Department, Cabaret Voltaire, Throbbing Gristle, early German Kraut rock of Kraftwerk and Faust. I immediately gravitated toward the music, the art, and styles; it all seemed like a natural fit. Art and music alleviated a lot of depression and anxiety the hung on my shoulders like a cloak. I started to consider the therapeutic aspects of creativity and decided to take my tape mixes as a form of expression instead of just a hobby. I used a lot of my downtime to start working on my tapes: most of the activity involved listening to a variety of radio programs and recording the most intriguing of the banter, everything from call-in talk radio programs that veered into conspiracy theories about the Kennedy assassinations to preachers proselytizing about the end times and the threat of nuclear Armageddon. I didn't own any musical instruments and didn't consider what I was doing as an art project yet, but after enough time and recordings, I felt there was a naïve type of collage forming and became more selective and crafted the cassettes to fit a theme or running idea. It was more of a pastime if anything, nothing I thought I could pursue or release as decent sounding material. However, New York City was open to a thousand possibilities. I wanted to experience what was happening in the

underground music and art scene, but I was young and had no guide, so it was up to me to find it.

Jarv also tended to find what was hot before the curve and bubble. I would often tag along as he sifted through cultural ephemera like a cool anthropologist on an expedition. I started to explore the city on my own, stumbling upon new and unusual galleries, record stores, and bookstores, which became my new and usual haunts. He started a band with some friends, but it was a short-lived project and decided to focus his energy on art and rare book collecting. He became an expert and had a knack for finding lost treasures. One time his wife Carol, a talented artist herself, found fashion designer Stephen Sprouse's sketches and notebooks literally tossed in a dumpster and with Jarv's help collected the cache. They co-authored a book that gives insight into the fashion world of the early 80's and saved crucial artifacts from being lost forever!

Jarv and I saw many midnight films together at the 8th Street Playhouse and Waverly Theatre including *Eraserhead*, *The Kids are Alright* documentary about The Who, and *Rocky Horror Picture Show*. But the films that made the biggest impression on me were those of John Waters, especially *Pink Flamingos*, *Desperate Living* and *Polyester*. I thought John Waters and his amazing cast had more insight on the underbelly of American society and culture than Frank Capra,



or even John Houston had in their entire oeuvre. Waters was an outsider to the Hollywood bullshit machine that pumped out sugar coated propaganda wrapped around the myth of patriarchy and meritocracy of Pollyanna / Horatio Alger lies to seduce the gullible American pallet, he used film as a lance to penetrate the normative hypocrisy Americans accept as decent all the while making us cringe and laugh out

loud at the sheer shock and gall. No other filmmaker dared to push the proverbial envelope under the nose of the American public more than John Waters.

Jarv and Carol were incredible influences and inspired me to find art and magic everywhere, it was all around us and up to us to discover and save it from disappearing forever.

"JARV": WITNESS TESTIMONY FROM JAVIER MAGRI

"It's 10 PM. Do You Know Where Your Children Are?"*

By Javier Magri 10.29.23

There were 12 of us at first. Just a bunch of kids having the time of our lives. Within that gang was an inner circle of creative types who would pursue their dreams in music & art. Music, most of all, brought us together as well as our love for cinema and books. It was the 70's – a time, if you were young enough, that felt magical everyday. We grew up in Long Island City, Queens. A blue collar factory town with unobstructed views of the Manhattan skyline. OZ to us.

Then there were 2.

Eddie (EJ) & I were Catholic schoolboys who would spend endless hours together listening to all the latest album releases from Pink Floyd, David Bowie, Led Zeppelin, Elton John, Black Sabbath, etc. Nothing was off the turntable because in our younger days everything was being experienced for the very first time. We listened, all at once, to the first waves of Ambient, Heavy Metal, Funk, Disco, Punk, New Wave, Rap & Industrial music. Everything we could get our hands on & play became the soundtrack of our lives and was discussed at high volume from album covers to lyrics.

We committed to memory songs and sung entire albums worth of material from beginning to end - mimicking guitars, bass and drums. Any money we had, we spent on records, so it's no wonder we were both thin as rails & walking all the time.

Ed turned me on to Michael Moorcock and I returned with a J.G. Ballard paperback for him to read. Even though he was just a few years younger I saw he was well versed

in Science Fiction & Fantasy. William S. Burroughs became a shared gateway for us & opened up an entire new realm of possibilities - to think and create using the cut-up technique.

In 1978 I enrolled in the High School of Art & Design in NYC. I finally arrived in OZ. New York, NEW YORK CITY! It was here at this time I felt a cosmic connection with the bands I loved and got to see them live. I got to see Queen in Madison Square Garden with Ed during their Jazz tour that year.

By 1979 everything seemed to be coming to us at warp speed. A new sound was in the air with an emerging club scene and D.I.Y. dress code 'round the outside. Now the bands we were listening to had weird names like Joy Division, Throbbing Gristle, Suicide, The Cure.

On Monday, December 8, 1980, John Lennon was murdered in front of The Dakota - his home in New York City. This to me, was The End of The 70's & The Beginning of the 1980's.

A few days later I called Ed on the telephone and I said - "I finally got the Talking Heads new album Remain in Light. Do you want to listen to it?"

*PSA, Public Service Announcement used for parents on American Television during the 1970's.

SUICIDE AT MAX'S KANSAS CITY 1979

By 1979, I was obsessed with Punk Rock. Sid Vicious made the front pages of all the newspapers for the murder of his girlfriend Nancy Spungen, then on the second of February, Sid died of an overdose in a friend's Greenwich Village apartment. The press seemed obsessed with the incidents and ran with the sensationalism, creating a media blitz, as well as anathema towards the punk genre, declaring it nihilistic and anti-social. I wanted to see it live and up close, but I didn't know my way around the city nor where the clubs were located. I only knew CBGB's as a name in the Daily News. So, one night, I took the subway to 14th Street and waited around in Union Square Park. I noticed four punk rockers walking by and I followed them about ten

paces behind hoping they were leading me to a nightclub. They stopped and entered Max's Kansas City. I didn't think it was a punk club because of the name. I crossed the street and took a deep breath, I had no idea what was going to happen next.

I went up to the doorman who looked like Charles Manson with a leather biker vest on and I asked "Punk Rock?" He replied, "Yeah man! Punk Rock! Go ahead!" Unsure if I was allowed in, I asked, "Can I go check it out?" Manson replied, "Yeah man! Go check it out!" He points upstairs where the bands performed. When I reached the front of the stage, I saw a jittery looking guy with a pompadour and silver boots doing some type of spastic interpretive dance to what sounded like a subway train like rhythm and a Farfisa organ blurring out distorted chords. The keyboard player had huge wrap around glasses and a tight leather jacket zipped up to his neck. I had no idea what I was watching. I was transfixed.

max's kansas city presents NEW YORK ROCK

From the 1980 WEEKLY NEWS

Festival Schedule:
(ALL SHOWS BEGIN AT 10:00 P.M.)

<p>WEDNESDAY APRIL 11</p> <p>INVADERS featuring Lester Bangs THE HEAT PLUS SPECIAL GUEST JOHN COLLINS</p> <p>THURSDAY APRIL 12</p> <p>Miki ZONE ZOO NEON LEON REVELONS SU-SIN-SHOCKS</p> <p>FRIDAY APRIL 13</p> <p>SUICIDE STUDENT TEACHERS BLOODLESS PHAROHS PLUS SPECIAL GUEST WALTER STEDING</p> <p>SATURDAY APRIL 14</p> <p>VICTIMS PEROXIDE featuring LYN TODD PLUS SPECIAL GUESTS LOST HATS SCOUT HOUSE</p> <p>SUNDAY APRIL 15</p> <p>MUMPS CHRIS STAMEY & THE D.B.'s JUMPERS SPECIAL GUESTS KIERAN LISCOE RHYTHM BAND</p>	<p>WEDNESDAY APRIL 11</p> <p>BLESSED DONNA DESTRI & FRIENDS THE THE PLUS SPECIAL GUESTS JOY & AYS</p> <p>THURSDAY APRIL 12</p> <p>TEENAGE JESUS & THE JERKS BLUE HUMANS MARTIN REV PLUS SPECIAL GUEST VON LMO</p> <p>FRIDAY APRIL 13</p> <p>THE OFFENDING, A FILM SERIAL BY BETH & SCOTT & PARTS 1 & 2 SAPHO KONGRESS PLUS SPECIAL GUESTS FROM SAN FRANCISCO THE OFFS</p> <p>SATURDAY APRIL 14</p> <p>RUBY & THE REDNECKS SPEEDIES COMATEENS FLIRT</p> <p>SUNDAY APRIL 15</p> <p>SENDERS NECESSARIES THE ZANTEES TERRORISTS</p> <p>MONDAY APRIL 16</p> <p>CONTORTIONS MODEL CITIZENS JEFFREY LOHN RHYS CHATHAM</p>
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PHOTOGRAPHS:

- Miki ZONE
- LYON LUNCH (TEENAGE JESUS)
- INVADERS
- PEROXIDE
- SENDERS
- NEON LEON
- VICTIMS
- SUICIDE
- JAMES CHANCE (CONTORTIONS)
- SAPHO
- BLESSED
- RUBY

I thought I was going to see a full band with a drummer and guitar. This was beyond the standard quartet banging away power chords. Alan, the singer, crooned and swayed like a futuristic Elvis Presley with enough soul and conviction to last a lifetime of memory. Martin stood stoic and coolly detached from the audience, his

wrists moving in piston-like control over the keyboard. I felt like I was in the presence of something golden, holy even. I was still, filled with excitement and awe.

I thanked the doorman on the way out as I ran back to the 14th Street subway station and returned home before midnight. It was a school night, and I took some heat from my mom but I felt it was worth the trouble. I witnessed something so affirmative and life changing that I decided to stay out of the clubs for several months to keep peace with my parents.

Once I saw Suicide, everything changed, I realized that art, like music, had unlimited parameters and I was only scratching the surface of possibilities. Suicide, like PS-1, and my conversations with my friend Jarv were liberating me from a narrow experience of art and how to live a life, and it was up to me to go and do whatever I wanted in art or music. No more preconceptions of what art was or wasn't. Just get started and do it.

As far as direction and style, I was tempted to mimic and craft my music after Suicide, Cabaret Voltaire and The Human League. But there were many up and coming projects already on that path, and to sound too much like one's influences is often pale and obvious to discerning ears. I didn't want to be a knock-off of any of these bands, no matter how much I loved them, I had to find my own sound and explore new ways of creating music.

I started to collect cheap, damaged, and often outmoded pieces of equipment to add to my grandfather's collection of tape recorders. My school friend George dropped playing bass and permanently loaned me his instrument, overdrive pedal and practice amplifier with a lousy sounding cone speaker that gave off a nasty fuzz if tuned up too loudly. Jarv sold me an Electro Harmonix rhythm box with a limited setting and a cheesy disco echo effect, and a Casio VL-Tone push button key synthesizer. I also incorporated power tools on metal, adaptors, cables and plastic microphones that I picked up at the local Radio Shack. I realized early on that a band, even a punk band would be an expense that I couldn't afford, but seeing Suicide showed me that with a few rudimentary pieces of music and electronic gear, anybody can afford to create music and art.

*SUICIDE AT MAX'S KANSAS CITY 1979: WITNESS TESTIMONY FROM
MATT GREEN (CLEOPATRA RECORDS)*

I've known EJ since we were teenagers growing up back in New York. He's always been someone who I could talk about music with at length. He always had an ear for sounds that most wouldn't understand and he was equally as driven to create these noise soundscapes on his own. The results were never less than unsettling and this tape was a perfect debut work.

HELLTOWN INCORPORATED & MIND OVER MATTER
PRODUCTIONS

"In the USA, you have to be a deviant, or die of boredom."

– William S. Burroughs

"Boredom is the root of all evil, the despairing refusal to be oneself"

– Soren Kierkegaard

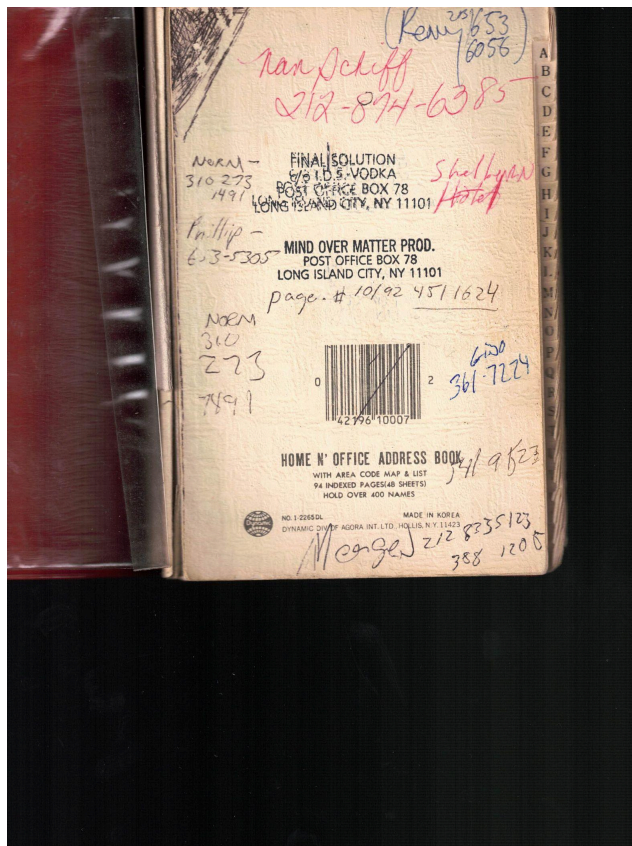
The name of the project was inspired from my walks home from Long Island City High School where I passed a methadone clinic, an unemployment center, a recruiting office for the armed forces and several factories owned and operated by Eagle Electric which made industrial parts like wall sockets and lighting components. All the misfortunes of life became a daily tour and somewhat bleak reminder of what life after high school may have to offer. The factory district had what back then was termed "she-male" prostitutes and pimps waiting in parked cars; junkies and riff raff were always wandering around right outside of the saddest looking topless bar I've ever seen, where neighborhood dropouts passed the time. I dreaded the idea of graduating and thought I was going to wind up working in one of these factories.

I imagined a town, or a company, that was completely corrupted by vice and lost virtue. Long Island City (LIC) at that time was vastly different from Astoria which was residential and somewhat respectable Queens neighborhood with a strong Mediterranean Greek/Italian intergenerational heritage; it was common to see framed headshots of Greek American actor Telly "Theo" Savalas who was seen as hero to the community in many of the delicatessens and diners on Ditmars boulevard.

LIC on the other hand was hemmed in by the East River and Newtown Creek and was predominantly industrial with residential blocks lined with brownstone apartments. I started to see reality as a giant open air manufacturing plant that pumped out both excellent and terrible quality products, that were in fact owned and operated by multinational corporations and filtered through my unfortunate attitude toward work, popular culture, history, and society which seemed to be leaning into bureaucratic automation by soon-to-be-obsolete technology and replaced by even more cybernetic systems of control. As long as the masses were

distracted and Wall Street powered on, there was no stopping the new dark ages of the future. The dreariness of the neighborhood environment paired with the elements of crime, urban blight, and false optimism of a better way of life was the backdrop to the music for Helltown Inc. and proved to be the perfect petri dish to start an Industrial-Experimental art/sound project.

There is a post office on 21st street, across the street from PS-1 Museum where I rented *Post Office Box 78* in 1981. I started to contact a myriad of small music labels and fanzines, as well as fringe organizations as diverse as the



John Birch Society, American Atheists, Jack Chick bible tracts (free with a stamp!), The Hemlock Society (that promoted euthanasia and medically assisted suicide) and Jews for Jesus. I was fascinated by ideologies and belief systems that proliferated throughout American culture. Some great resources were the "High Weirdness by Mail" compendium published by The Church of the SubGenius, Loompanics, The Paladin Press, and Semiotext(e) quarterly.

Inspirations came from the experimental tape underground, tabloid media and American culture jamming agit-propaganda that flipped mass media, and popular culture on its head. There is a unique type of American kitsch that used imagery of patriotism and prosperity that came out of the Second World War. Norman Rockwell, J.C. Leyendecker as well as many examples of advertising that were popular in news and hobby magazines promoted a normalization of masculine/feminine roles using typical tropes such as military veterans, the business or blue-collar worker as the breadwinning head of the household while depicting women and wives as the domestic housekeeping and child rearing obedient partners.

By the early 50's, magazines like The Saturday Evening Post were diminishing in popularity, while Time and Life started to appeal to a wider and younger generation of readers, especially during World War Two and the Korean and Vietnam War's with their dramatic, and often controversial photos of battle, destruction, and death. Film and television were already deeply entrenched in a fantastic visage of heroism and an ideal model of living that was based on patriarchy, heroism, and a covert white privilege religious like fervor for Capitalism on high. Success was based on status and material holdings such as property and automobiles, and the advertising agencies of Madison Avenue and Hollywood studios reinforced these idealized and fantastic images of American prosperity and power. As long as the American citizenry conformed to the hegemonic order and power of hyper-Capitalism, Disneyworld can be your new Utopia. There was a similarity to the propaganda of the early Soviet Constructivists poster imagery and message of a united people and national pride of family and labor replacing Mickey Mouse and Ronald McDonald with Marx and Lenin, American Gothic indeed!

The cold war paranoia and propaganda from the early 1950's helped stir a suspicion not only of closet communists but of any type of marginalized group. Meanwhile covert operations by the CIA and other lesser-known intelligence bureaus were running COINTELPRO operations on the general public without consent including MK ULTRA and HAARP, which provided early pioneers of punk and Industrial artist with a wealth of content and confirmed the spook intuition that all is not as it seems. These tropes started to surface in the art and music of the sub-underground cultures.



Two postcards mailed to Mind Over Matter Productions, late 80's

There was a new breed of artists cropping up in the 1970's that spawned the culture jamming movement and influenced both political activism and the rising punk movement. Artists such as Jamie Reid, who worked in partnership with fellow college schoolmate Malcolm McLaren and Dame Vivienne Westwood to help create the aesthetics for the 1970's Punk Rock movement in the UK. They created cultural aspects such as controversial posters for the Sex Pistols, clothing from the then underground world of BDSM with symbols of heretical and political extremism

focusing on divisive and outrageous topics that were thought better off left unsaid. This, instead, was a full-frontal attack. They jammed the cultures in a series of London boutiques. As this boutique styled anarchy became more mainstream and less sharp, the team of Penny Rimbaud and Gee Vaucher visual artists for Crass Records set the stage. They were a massive influence on punk culture through their distinctive look and general attitude that fit the music's metatextual content. The cover and poster art basically translates the band's approach and were instantly identifiable by fans. This was not boutique punk. In America, this new culture jamming was taking hold through artists like Gary Panter, Mark Flood from the Texas band Culticide, Winston Smith (who worked with the Dead Kennedys and the Alternative Tentacles record label), Raymond Pettibon, inhouse artist for SST records (e.g., Black Flag, Minutemen).

On another level but relevant to the era of information, Vienna born, and Cornell educated Edward Bernays pioneered public relations from the early 1920's on using social science, with a mixture of psychology, focusing on conformity with a bit of psychographic manipulation to change public opinion and perception on everything from tobacco products to politicians. It wasn't until the late 50's when philosophers like Marshall McLuhan, Neil Postman, and Jacques Ellul and the semiotics movement of mid 60's Post-Structuralism started to investigate the power and influence of media, advertising and technology on the general population, political ideology and the paradigm shift of power away from democracy to a bizarre hybrid of *hyper-capitalism* mediated image and a type of simulacrum of unrealistic lifestyle created by the "entertainment exchange" while feeding off people's desires and narcissistic fantasies. It was no longer good enough to be successful, the ambition toward celebrity status was also part of the goal in a game for the upwardly mobile and generationally wealthy, you can *eat the rich* only if you *screw the poor*. But none of it counted for anything unless other, less fortunate people from the class below feel the hegemonic power of oppression and rude hubris while seeing the status symbols Thorstein Veblen made visible in his 1899 masterpiece, *Conspicuous Consumption*, which has become the benchmark for both economists, sociologists, and marketing gurus to understand wealth, taste, and status in contemporary life.

There was also a boom in the self-help life coach industry with a plethora of seminars and best-selling books anybody can pick up at the local drug or grocery stores, as well as encounter groups promoting convoluted programs of quasi-Eastern philosophy intertwined with wellness, yoga, and supplements all of course for a nominal fee! The so-called New Age movement was already underway by the turn of the century with "health camps" for the well to do, by the 1950's it was remarketed to the middle class and by the seventies professionals with degrees in psychology and business were opening centers throughout the country inviting people to experience everything from biofeedback machines to confrontational exercises as practiced by EST and Osho (Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh) as a way of "breaking the ego" and allowing whatever ideology to be imprinted on the followers

From the mid 70's into the 80's the quest for notoriety was the high stakes game. People like Donald Trump and many others who worshipped the unfettered markets as described by Milton Friedman's seminal 1980 bestselling book *Free to Choose*. You could smell the proverbial cooked goose of the working class wafting through the air from Wall Street to Main Street USA. Only one decade later and the ascension of the personal computer and a powerful internet infrastructure could allow any megalomaniac or scam company access to millions of others online and hungry for more, anything the internet and the so-called free market can serve up as commodity, exchange, ego.

But, for the average working-class family, these images proved to be only aspirational, but never truly achieved. The nuts-and-bolts reality of mortgages, inflation and steady employment were the constant grind and there was no time to reset and pursue new ways of living, or even new ideas which were usually shot down as ideological bullshit for my *fancy downtown artist types*, as my aunt Rose once intoned while explaining the facts of life to me over after dinner coffee. The city and the power structure that maintained it was all a battle against boredom and goon mentality. I started to greatly dislike the individual as much as the herd of the masses. Welcome to Helltown.

PS-1 Museum

"You Can't Go Home Again."

– Tom Wolfe



Edward Giles at PS-1 Museum (Photo by Mia Ziemniak, mid-80's)

The idea of pursuing art or music always distracted me from the mundane and frightening reality of being locked in an unfulfilling job with little or no promotion or inspiration. Instead of moral support from family, or friends I was dissuaded to find gainful employment. Jarv was the only one I knew to get serious about pursuing by going to art school. We'd often discussed ideas during long walks through the factory and warehouse areas of Long Island City that always served as an inspiration for planning a future outside the confines of the neighborhood.

PS-1 was literally a public school in use in the 1950's, the building was repurposed and opened to the public as a cutting-edge museum space in 1971 as the Institute for Art and Urban Resources by Alanna Heiss. One of the unique aspects of the building was the classroom spaces and indoor auditorium that was perfect for larger works of sculpture or mixed media installations. Another benefit of the school layout and floor planning was it was easy to divide the building up for viewing galleries on the north section, and artist in residence studios on the south side of the building. It was common to see artists at work on new paintings, and sculptures throughout the building; it was literally an art colony.

My friends and I played stickball and touch football with the neighborhood kids in the parking lot. One day, I tried the front door and it opened. The halls were lined with lockers. Peeling green paint with maroon trim littered the black tiled floor with specks. The interior looked untouched for years, and the building seemed abandoned, until I heard a hammering from inside one of the classrooms. I chatted up with a man assembling a riser made of wood. He was a sculptor and wanted his art to be window level so it could be seen from the courtyard; the artist turned out to be Vito Acconci who was totally sweet and informative. I pestered him with dozens of questions as he tried to assemble his art. I encouraged my mother to attend the opening on Saturday. Vito shoveled coal into the building's furnace down in the sub-basement as a performance, I was sold. That's why Vito Acconci is my favorite artist.

The enticing scent of turpentine, oil paint and freshly cut wood listing from the studios were inspiring. The occasional sound of power tools interrupting music from paint-stained boom boxes were the soundtrack of the artists in residence on the studio side of the building. It was there I met artists from around the world. Some were somber and unsociable, others bright and chatty, and eager to discuss ideas when I came by their rooms to discuss their new works.



Chris Dercon was the director of the museum. One afternoon Chris asked if I was interested in contributing a short piece of music to a big multimedia, collaborative show in Brussels. He explained that he had known the curators for years and my sounds would be a good fit for the show. He told me to, *"use the PS-1 address and fax for a contact. I'll set it up."* I decided on a side-long jam of metal scraping, power tools, motors, broken glass, and tape loops I called, *"Incidental Industrial Music."* Several weeks later, Chris received a fax from Brussels. *"Congratulations Eddie, your tape was accepted! Read the fax."* As a gesture of appreciation, I offered to help Chris and his

girlfriend paint their apartment on my day off. While finishing up the library room, I asked in a tete-a-tete, *"Out of all of the artists or creative people, who is your favorite?"* Without missing a beat Chris said *"John Cassavetes."* "Why," I asked. *"He was an iconoclast, he did what he wanted, and made the films he wanted to make without the Hollywood machine behind him."* Before I left, Chris handed me a copy of the *Semiotext(e)* "Schizo/Culture" edition as a thank you gift. *"Here!"* Chris said in his Germanic affected Belgium accent. *"You'll like this, very much similar to your art ideas."* He had a twinkle in his eye as if he knew how subversive the contents and radical ideas were.

As I read it, my thinking was automatically transformed to look at art, the world, and my place in a completely new and radical way. Prior to *Semiotext(e)*, there was very little art theory that spoke to me. I had a copy of "Art as Experience" by Fred Dewey, "Minimal Art, A Critical Anthology," edited by Gregory Battcock from 1968 and "Art and Visual Perception" by Rudolf Arnheim, and the influential, "Art in the age of Mechanical Reproduction" by Walter Benjamin were definite wells of knowledge and directed my focus from the pure basis what an object of art is, to an

actual praxis of how to approach the phenomenological aspects of material contextualization. In other words: What space exists between concept (thought/idea), materials and tools to produce or create a work of art, and how does it exist as an object in itself?

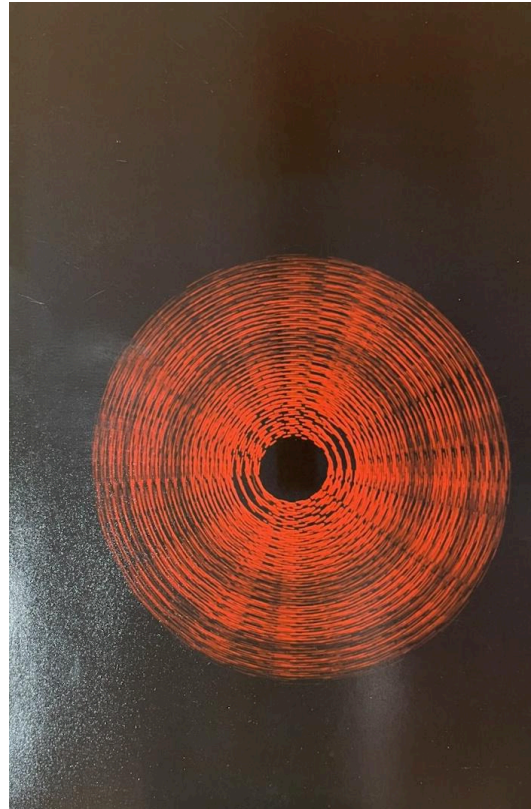
However, it was through Semiotext(e) that I discovered the most significant postmodern thinkers such as Jean Baudrillard, Michel Foucault, Paul Virilio, Julia Kristeva, Donna Haraway, and Jean-Francois Lyotard whose 1979 book, "The Post-Modern Condition" and Guy Debord's "Society of the Spectacle" became my gospels, along with Hakim Bey's "Temporary Autonomous Zones," and Gilles Deleuze/Felix Guattari's "A Thousand Plateaus" and Anti-Oedipus which sat smugly with the "Post-Modern" and science fiction novels of William S. Burroughs, John Brunner, J.G. Ballard, Thomas Pynchon and Don DeLillo that I was reading at the time.



It was a whirlwind of new, fresh ideas that liberated me from the stifling procedures of the everyday life around me, since my formal education was devoid of any real critical thinking and pathetically shallow lacking any type of dialectical reasoning, it was up to me to gather any and all forms of knowledge from history, news and media to fully understand the unknown limitations of art in an age when power by the military-industrial complex were advancing "control and command" objectives

through cybernetic computer technologies, government think tanks and the forging of policies that create free flows of funding and advanced innovations in weapons and the corporations that aid and abet the totalitarian war and law apparatus, while new era of surveillance was being implemented further down the dichotomy of the public/private space all citizens and activity exist, I became addicted to information. While taking in all this information, It was erroneous to think of myself in the same socio-economic bracket as the artists in studio residence at PS-1.

Perhaps, I was a very impressionable person, and a bit of an ad hoc sleuth trying to fill the wide gaps in my ignorance and a bit egotistically paranoid, I've been reminded several times in my life that "They're not after you." My mother told me often that if I wanted a nemesis or boogie man, "*Get audited by the IRS!*" She guaranteed that my hunches would all come to fruition if I went into serious debt with banks, credit cards, courts, or lending companies. "*You'll never get out from underneath, and you can kiss the art career goodbye!*" She had a point which I honor to this day. So, while I never went to a higher education institution, I didn't have to pay tuition or loans with runaway interest or sign up for credit cards. I may not have much cash on hand, but I was smart and shrewd enough to avoid the financial pitfalls of monstrous debt. It's a fair trade-off as far as I was concerned.



I decided to stay employed at PS-1, and forsake college or a better job with higher wages. I was happy, close to home and learning about art. The latent functions

of deviant activity by not going the standard route of the road less traveled, Robert Frost eat your heart out!

EDDIE CAUTION IN ALPHAVILLE

Alpha 60 – “*Do you know what illuminates the night?*”

Lemmy Caution – “*Poetry.*”

– Scene from *Alphaville*, Jean-Luc Godard, 1965

I was only aware of the films of Jean-Luc Goddard and the whole French New Wave movement from Walter’s increasing VHS video collection, and what I saw on PBS public television when the 1966 Francois Truffaut adaptation of *Fahrenheit 451* was aired. The more academic adept cinema critics and post-Structuralists seem to devour the genre and make it a benchmark of filmmaking. Italian Neo-Realist film style was becoming very predictable and was losing my interest. I had no knowledge of what I was about to experience at PS-1 in the fall of 1985.

One of the curated programs featured a multi-media display spread over most of the first-floor feature galleries. I was assigned to watch this area and assist in rewinding videos that played during viewing hours. So, from noon to six pm, I sat in the gallery and viewed *Alphaville*. I became mechanical in rewinding the VHS tape and restarting the film from the beginning. Visitors would passively watch for a few moments, or minutes depending on their interest and attention like those who pass by an appliance store and catch a few minutes of television on display in the store window.

I became increasingly obsessed with *Alphaville*, it became a parallel dimension to the dreary environs of Long Island City, I was even tempted to start a second side project called ‘Lemmy Caution’, based on the central protagonist of the film. It’s

layered plots, sub-plots and themes shot in a beautiful black and white noir shadowing of claustrophobic interiors and orbicular, looped cityscapes connected by roads and under authoritarian control by "Alpha 60," a faceless voiced master computer machine that designates all bureaucracy down to the degree of human nature. Reason, poetry, even love is reduced to actions devoid of purpose or intention. While the "Outlanders" who live outside of Alphaville were not brainwashed or hypnotized by the total automated technological fist of Alpha 60's oppressive nature. I saw this film in direct lineage of other dystopian themes in the novels *1984*, *Brave New World*, and *Player Piano* by Kurt Vonnegut Jr.



Edward Giles, circa 1983

I became transfixed by the images and dialog, as Lemmy and Natacha become emotionally entangled in a doomed society run by emotionless data banks and TV eyes. There was no irony lost as I saw the same tropes replayed in reality. I felt I was living in two realities that mirrored on another, one a slick technicolor nightmare of the 80's "blare and glare" MTV video style of hyper consumerism and hubris, the other a shadowy noir chiaroscuro German Expressionism and French New Wave cinema movements.

I was also informed by early film and video artists Hollis Frampton, Stan Brakhage, Ernie Gehr, Dan Graham, Micheal Snow and Maya Deren. These filmmakers pursued an aesthetic unlike the fabrication of Hollywood's propaganda tropes and the normalization of functional society. So, where the "grind house" meets the "art house" film were the parameters in which I visualized the reality around me. In order to survive the trauma of the stratified inequality I saw in the "Cinematic-Reality" verité being played out in everyday events. I became a "human camera" silently

filming the raw data of life directly into the memory banks of my brain. I never want to forget these moments and scenes, nor could I forget them as they shaped and molded my identity and to a point an ideology that I found at times similar to a cross between French playwright and activist Jean Genet and the theories of Canadians Erving Goffman and Marshall McLuhan.

There was a fusion of cinema, literature, and reality. All locations, interiors and exteriors became stages, I started to see people and the dramatic scenarios as scripted formats. I learned histrionic expressions and how to act around others from the cues I picked up from classic movies. It taught me how to look and listen to the world and people around me. I no longer was concerned with the illusion of the authentic "Self," and acted appropriately in the situation I was in at the time. My emotions always got the best of me, so I mimicked scenes, even down to the dialog and cliches to communicate to others from movies. No one ever caught on, and it gave me the impression that I was mature for my age.

I became convinced that television and the moving image had permanently damaged the collective of the American psyche. The evolution of media and news proliferated and disseminated historical epoch and shock events as a dualistic form of information and entertainment. The Pearl Harbor attack, The H-bombs of Japan, and the Zapruder film of President John F. Kennedy's assassination seem to have affixed a psychological meme in the absolute definition of the word. There was now an irreversible stream of how the world, but in particular American sensibilities to world history, changed events. Hollywood and the dominions of news broadcasting have captivated the home audience with a pastiche of half-truths, historical fiction, speculations and myths from the inception of cathode ray tubes and the advanced inventions of Philo T. Farnsworth, who's influence and innovations in electronic engineering are honored in the halls of Capitol Hill with a full statue.

It was this otherness, this middle space between fiction and reality that I staked my claim. The subversive power of mass conformity and propaganda that controls the market, and thus the world of not only commodities, and desires, and opinion but also of images. These ideas will be fully realized at the dawn of the 21st century

with the advent of artificial intelligence and *deep fakes*. The future may be unwritten, but it is definitely coded.

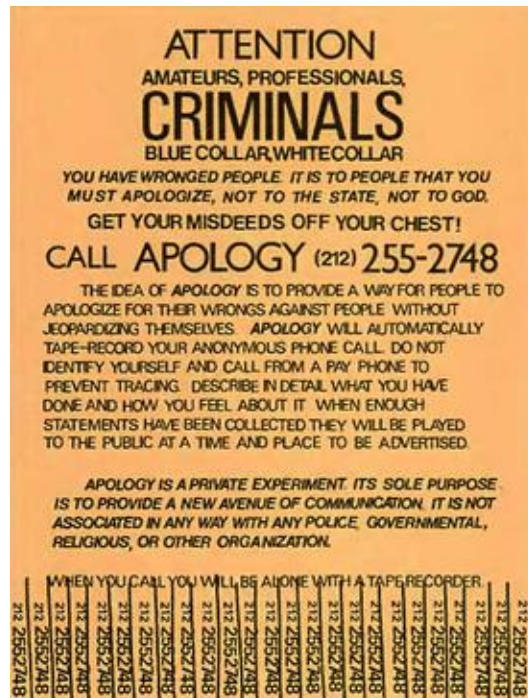
"PRAY", "APOLOGY", & "TIMES SQUARE"

"And the words of the prophets were written on the subway walls."

– Simon & Garfunkel, The Sound Of Silence, 1966

There were many mysteries and clues that lived in the sub-underground of New York City that could only be read like a lost language by those who deciphered the traces and forever looping labyrinth that the city became. The pathology of expression and leaving some mark or service similar to animals marking territory or the most skilled graffiti artists that had literal all access throughout the deep cavernous "morlocks" tunnels and passageways below the city streets.

Me and my longtime friend Dito came across the first flyer by "Mr. Apology" as early as 1981. It was taped to a street lamp post off 44th and 7th Avenue (*see flyer*). Dialing 212-255-2748 would connect the caller to a recorded message explaining instructions on how to use and navigate the options on how to leave a voice recording of anything the caller wanted to confess, share, vent in a safe anonymous method to help people who are in crisis or need to "open up" about a particular situation. By using the telephone touchpad, one can leave an "apology" or listen to others who left messages from the prior week. I used a cheap microphone and recorded hours of confessions, omissions, and mad rants from hundreds of callers



from the public for ten years. One of these recordings is used as the "Intro" on the Final Solution's unreleased "*Mass Death*" album, and a photograph of me from a session with my friend Mia Z. found its way on the front cover of the Apology newsletter in the mid 90's (*see photo, bottom left of page*).

The identity of "Mr. Apology" remained unknown until his accidental death from being struck by a jet-skier while scuba diving on vacation, ironically the responsible driver fled and was never charged with the incident, thus the ultimate and fatal irony of all the anonymous apologies ever encountered. Allen Bridge was survived by his second wife Marissa.



That summer, Dito and I worked at the same street advertisement agency basically handing out pamphlets for a newly opened health spa and gym in midtown Manhattan. The job was a great way to people-watch and come across many characters up close and personal. This is where I met Mia Z. from the suburbs of Butler, New Jersey. I first saw her pass me on the corners of 46th and 6th avenue and deliberately force-handed her a brochure in a gesture that would be harassment or assault these days. There was something different about her; her aura was out of step with all the worker drones and boring office types.

Turned out she had amazing taste in music, art, and movies; we became fast friends, and I accompanied her to many great concerts and gallery openings. She had an eye for photography, being a great photographer, and we did a photo shoot at her parents' house in Butler, New Jersey. As a gesture of gratitude, I gave Mia an autographed copy of *Gods of Heaven and Earth* hardbound book from the Joel Peter-Witkin exhibit.

One afternoon as I took a break from the summer sun and heat in Grand Central Station, I was sitting on one of the wooden benches that resemble church pews, when I saw a woman, maybe in her 50's but looked older wearing a knee length skirt, threadbare hoodie and sneakers, hair up in a bun. She looked slightly disheveled but physically fit, and a bit psychotic with unblinking crystal blue eyes while the noonday sun beamed through the arched windows giving the grand concourse an ominous glow against the volley of catacomb gloom. She moved almost invisible to the bustling commuters and visitors in a bee line to the pay



telephones at the far wall in a tight row. She looked around then suddenly pulled her hand from the hoodie and carved something into the black metal casing of the phone with a sharp device that fit over her right index finger. It was that moment when I realized it was "*her*," the person responsible for hundreds of "Pray" and "Worship God" scrawling on every single space of the MTA public transportation system, even city buses were tagged. She must have spent hours a day and years getting her messages up. It was a true phenomenon that revealed itself in one quick New York City moment like seeing a rare exotic animal thought long extinct, or a true ghost like apparition stalking through the labyrinth of subway stations under the city.

A short walk from Grand Central Station is a permanent sound installation by Max Neuhaus which is located between 45th and 46th street at the Broadway Pedestrian Plaza. The piece was installed in 1977 underneath steel gratings that are used at ventilation, worker maintenance access and emergency exits for the subway system. I would often traverse the midtown foot traffic to stand above the grates and absorb the whirring audio that is ignored by thousands of city dwellers and visitors alike as

background drones and humming which could be mistaken for a poor insulated compressor or generator amidst the din of natural street ambience in the busiest districts of Manhattan. However, Times Square has a complex harmonic and wave cycle that if carefully listened to repeats in expanding and contracting breaths like a mechanical respiratory system.

It was in these moments, I realized how the whole city was cloaked in secrets and mysteries, a million clues leading to and myriad of directions. It's one of the attractions to big cities, the anonymous world of people, places and things that are seemingly unconnected at first but start to appear if one is aware, and open enough to let the signs direct you to another hidden dimension superimposed on the everyday environment and situations that occur. It's the closest thing to a religious experience I've had, the totality of chaos and harmony in motion.

*"PRAY", "APOLOGY", & "TIMES SQUARE": WITNESS TESTIMONY FROM
MLA ZIEMNIAK*

Meeting EJ in the mid-80's changed the trajectory of my life in many ways but I'll stick to the two most important ones. First, he gave me exposure to NYC's true avant garde, underground art and music scene and second, he kept me safe while we probed the darkness of the human race. It wasn't very natural for young women to be curious about locating Son of Sam's graffiti in Untermyer Gardens or exploring nihilism in books and art. He never judged me and gleefully encouraged this research. We would often peer into the abyss and sometimes find comedy in the tragedy of mankind. And there might have been some whips and chains but I'll save that for another time.

*"PRAY", "APOLOGY", & "TIMES SQUARE": WITNESS TESTIMONY FROM
JASON ZIEMNIAK (DEATH BY A THOUSAND CUTS / CHROME PEELER
RECORDS)*

Some people need a handshake and some people need a hand grenade.

Where an edgy image is just a search engine result away, EJ pulls up in your driveway, pops the trunk of his (probably stolen) Camaro and shows you the blood spattered purses of streetwalkers, robbed for drug money.

Reality is ugly, noise is ugly. EJ is your eyes to the ugliness.

*"PRAY", "APOLOGY", & "TIMES SQUARE": WITNESS TESTIMONY FROM
SHAWNA KENNEY*

You never knew what to expect with the Eddie Nervo Experience. I have witnessed him connect a small robot with glowing eyes to an electronic oscillator of some sort, emitting cacophony throughout whatever rooftop or basement venue we found ourselves in. I once invited him to share his poetry at a reading in an independent bookstore in Los Angeles, with myself and our mutual friend Dito Montiel. Eddie showed up wearing a suit and rose-tinted sunglasses, holding a brown box. In it was the poem, scrawled on a stack of folded-and-still-connected dot matrix paper, the likes of which no one had seen since the 1980's.

When he was called to the stage, Eddie lifted the first sheet from the box and proceeded to read his work. It continued on and on, the trail of paper he pulled from the box for each stanza seemingly never-ending. As the audience squirmed, the bookstore manager looked to Dito and I for help, her eyes asking, "how long is this poem?" Dito and I looked at one another, laughing and shrugging. Eddie eventually wrapped it up. Los Angeles was treated to an Andy Kauffman-style literary performance, and we are all the better for it.

– Shawna Kenney, author of *I Was a Teenage Dominatrix* (Punk Hostage Press) and *Live at the Safari Club: A History of HarDCore Punk in the Nation's Capital* (Rare Bird Books).

THE CATHODE RAY MISSION

"Your reality is already half a video hallucination. If you're not careful, it will become total hallucination. You'll have to learn to live in a very strange new world."

– Dr. Brian Oblivion (from the film Videodrome, 1983)

Conceptual installation art fascinated me, the site-specific use of space, light, and materials to create ambient immersive environments held together with intertextual meaning was where I wanted to take any 3-dimensional large-scale work, if given the opportunity. I had dozens of ideas in my notebooks, but limited funds, tools, and a skillset to execute the work to satisfy the balance between perfection and the patience to achieve a level of acceptance within the arts construction. It wasn't the details of the art object I was focused on; it was the intent and after effect of experience that I was concerned with. I wanted to create *experiential rooms* the viewer would remember as a latent thought or memory for as long as the brain can seize and remember it.

There was a small unused janitor's closet on the third floor of PS-1, down the corridor from the James Turrell "*Meetings*" installation, I asked Chris Dercon if I could build an *experience room* inside the closet, "*Sure,*" he said. My first task was to paint the walls a battleship gray and the floor black, then I cut two pieces of wood on 90-degree angles for the corners of the room. I placed a pair of old color television sets on each shelf and took the horizontal controls down to narrow beams across both screens. Next, I found a leather reclining chair in great condition on the street not far from PS-1 and carried it up to the room. The seat was perfect eye level with the screens. In one corner of the room were several in-laid shelves for storage. I used an AM/FM boombox with a tape player and detachable speakers that I hung from the wall over the televisions.

Radio Shack sold looped audio cassettes at various lengths for telephone voicemail machines. I created several electronic pieces using various combinations of the Casio

VL Tone and Roland SH-101 synthesizers and small motorized appliances such as an electric can opener, an air conditioning unit, and an air filtering device for aquariums. The looped soundtracks were inspired by a litter of subliminal self-help tapes I found at thrift stores for everything from smoking reduction to anger management. Even my mom and aunt caught the trend and used tapes for calming down and focusing. The music was influenced by composers Terry Burrows, Brian Eno, and Alan Splet who collaborated David Lynch on the Eraserhead soundtrack. I chose the title, "*The Cathode Ray Mission*" as an ode to filmmaker David Cronenberg's 1983 film Videodrome.



Roland SH-101 synthesizer, 1982

The idea was to have the viewer sit in the chair and focus each eye on a separate "light horizon" on the peripheral of vision creating a blind spot in the center of the darkened room, while listening to the looped tapes at a low volume. After a few minutes a balance between alpha/beta brain wave calm and psychological tension should build. It was a sub-conscious anathema to the James Turrell "*Meeting*" room. Most of the visitors enjoyed the experience, some felt uneasy and couldn't relax and allowed the room's environment to alter alpha wave brain activity. I wanted to keep a detailed report of all visitors with follow up telephone interviews to see how much

The Cathode Ray Mission changed their perception over time. The topic of altered memory and subliminal effect of technology and audio-video stimulation on the mind fascinated me, I wanted to change minds, not wash them. Imbedding memories through experience and the altering or changing over time, admittedly was a bit of quack psychology on my part.

I kept *The Cathode Ray Mission* for the remaining five years of employment at PS-1. When Chris Dercon left as director and PS-1 as an institution was becoming more mainstream and financially viable, accepting larger grants from wealthy institutions and corporations, I felt that its mission statement gave way to the reality of wealth and power. I found a position at the Strand bookstore in downtown Manhattan. On my last day, I handed the padlock key to the new director and said "*Thanks, bye!*" Done and done.

HARDCORE HIGH

"Here's to the maker, the double film taker, illusion type faker, guaranteed shaker, paravision viewer"

– Bad Brains, "At The Movies", 1979

I attended St Mary's and St Anthony's Catholic elementary school. One spring semester, there was a book fair and donation book drive to help the school's pathetic library. By the trash bin, was a cardboard box filled with rejected books that were questionable or considered too controversial for Catholic elementary students. I grabbed the box and headed to the abandoned freight train dock at Hunter's Point where the tracks terminated at the pier of the East River. It became a hangout for teenagers and graffiti artists. I rifled through the box and found a dozen or so interesting book titles like "Last Exit to Brooklyn" (Hubert Selby Jr.), "The Politics of Experience (R.D. Laing)," "One Dimensional Man" (Herbert Marcuse), "Future Shock" (Alvin Toffler), "Psycho-Cybernetics" by Maxwell Maltz, "The Naked Ape," "Naked Lunch," "No Exit" by Jean Paul Sartre, "Fear & Loathing in Las Vegas"

(Hunter S. Thompson), "Existentialism & Philosophy", "Man for Himself" by Erich Fromm, "Friedrich Nietzsche – A reader" and "Lady Chatterley's Lover" by D H Lawrence. There were some Jung/Freud based pop psychology and other trendy self-help books as well as a dog-eared, paperback copy of Dianetics that were typically sold near the check-out counters of supermarkets. These over-the-counter manifestos were the impetus of a new and radical trek for "self-discovery." I really disliked organized religions and hated the top-down approach of authoritarian pedagogy which I felt incomplete and reductive to fit the American ideology of meritocracy and exceptionalism, "God, Guns & Guts" Western frontier lawman style approach to success, and I wasn't for that. The irony is that these books were deemed inappropriate by the religious school, yet these books affected me deeply, more so than much of what was being taught at the school, and certainly much more than what was being taught at Catholic Youth Organization.

What attracted me to punk was its directness and attitude, it also lowered the bar for many self-taught musicians that didn't want to tread the well-worn road of blues or classical influence. Between the appropriation of American blues and jazz of heavy rock superstars like Led Zeppelin, Eric Clapton, and the Rolling Stones or the more sophisticated classical and often overplayed musical pretensions of prog rock from bands like Yes, King Crimson, The Nice and Emerson Lake and Palmer. Punk on first look, was a reset to the early 50's doo-wop and traditional Rock n Roll of the post-World War Two era. For as one dimensional and cartoonish as they were, the Ramones from Queens, New York were the epitome of back-to-basics garage band Rock n Roll. Its *sweet and tender street hoodlum* persona was a harkening back more in the same way Sha-Na-Na were aping the classic doo-wop corner crooners of my mother and aunts age of discovery. I also felt that punk rock called to the negative outsider, the unsocialized individuals who did not fit in with the lock step rigor of the adult world. It went further in its rejection than the hippie who dropped out of society of the 60's going into the 70's, that in hindsight was a complete disaster as we see more and more people being pushed out by high rent and low wages of the now. Rich kids slumming it and opting out only to rebound when things get real is a far cry from a suffering working class trying to make ends meet on a daily basis. The connection to the "angry young man" writers circle coming out post World War Two

to the bitterness of punk's hard-edged prose was obvious to me, the "fuck it" spirit was there on both fronts of literature and music.



Edward spotted in the crowd of a Minor Threat show (left). Later at a Negative Approach show (right) at the Mudd Club circa 1983 (Touch and Go label tour). Also performing that evening were Necros and Meatmen.

It was in high school where I met Davy Gunner vocalist from Kraut, Karloff Castro from Crib Death, AJ Novello and Jose Ochea (co-founders of Leeway), John Pappas vocalist for Gillian's Revenge (which would later become Token Entry), and Anthony Comunale (singer in Raw Deal and Killing Time) All of us would eat in the school cafeteria and swap records and tapes, and gossip. Davy was the star of the crew; he was the lead singer of Kraut, the band had a three-song, seven-inch ep out called "*Kill for Cash*." They were playing out frequently and getting positive press. Davy had charisma and was funny, so many non punks in our school got along fine with him. We all learned a lot from him. Through Davy, I eventually became a roadie for Kraut. It was fun and I was able to go to many early Hardcore shows, seeing classic New

York bands Crucial Truth, Heart Attack, The Mob, Bad Brains, Reagan Youth, Major Conflict, Urban Waste.

But, the two bands in the New York punk scene that impressed me were the Nihilistics and later on Sheer Terror. For me they were the living embodiment of all my negativity and anger towards all the shithead goons, corrupt police, and disgusting yuppie scum that ran the city. While other bands banged away about "unity" and Reagan blah, the Nihilistics had a visceral animosity that came off the stage like a storm of vehemence aimed at the audience. Kraut was on several bills for Nihilistics and each time I got to know them well enough to consider them friends. Whenever they performed, I was there. I even brought my stepfather Walter to a show in Connecticut; I figured with his attitude and constant passive aggression he would at least connect on some level.

In 1981, one of the shows that made a strong impression on me was a unique billing of the Nihilistics, Listen to the Animals, and Industrial metal percussionist Z'EV's side project UNS performed at the Joseph Papp Theater (*photo in "Leaving The Missing" chapter*). Andy Warhol and John Belushi were in attendance. All three acts were outstanding, each had their own unique sound and style. I was in awe of UNS (Z'EV) who used two turntables and a large cane that he thumped on the floor to make the records jump and skip at different times while he spoke through a megaphone in a very distant authoritarian voice. I own a copy of the Z'EV record "*Salts of Heavy Metals*" and had the Target Video four way split with Flipper, Factrix, Nervous Gender and UNS and considered it one of my favorite albums. So, actually seeing UNS was a dream come true.

After the show, there was a get-together at someone's apartment not far from the theater, so I followed along. Mike, Ron, and Chris T. were there drinking and socializing. Z'EV (real name Stefan Joel Weisser) was sitting on a chair and talking about the kabbalah, hypnosis, trance inducing states of mind and numerology, the discussion drifted from computers and cybernetics to Japanese Butoh theater and gamelan music. But, for Z'EV, all these topics were treated and discussed as the same process, there was no separation from any system to another, it was all one; that was deep. I felt high talking to him. I told him I owned copies of "*Salt of Heavy Metals*"

and the Subterranean Video live compilation with UNS tracks, and a rare double seven inch on clear vinyl. He smiled and thanked me. I said Z'EV was cave music and UNS was "subway" music "*The subways are our urban caves,*" I suggested. He liked the analogy.

I was expelled from St John's Prep for vandalism and apathetic grades, I was failing every class. My mother was appalled by my behavior, and I felt deeply ashamed of myself as her aspirations of me being college bound diminished. It was a very difficult time, and my snotty attitude did not help any. I wound up at the inferior and publicly run Long Island City High School which had "Big" Rob (from Armed Citizens), Dito Montiel (guitarist for Major Conflict), and Christian von Kegler (from King of Kings and Midnight Sun).

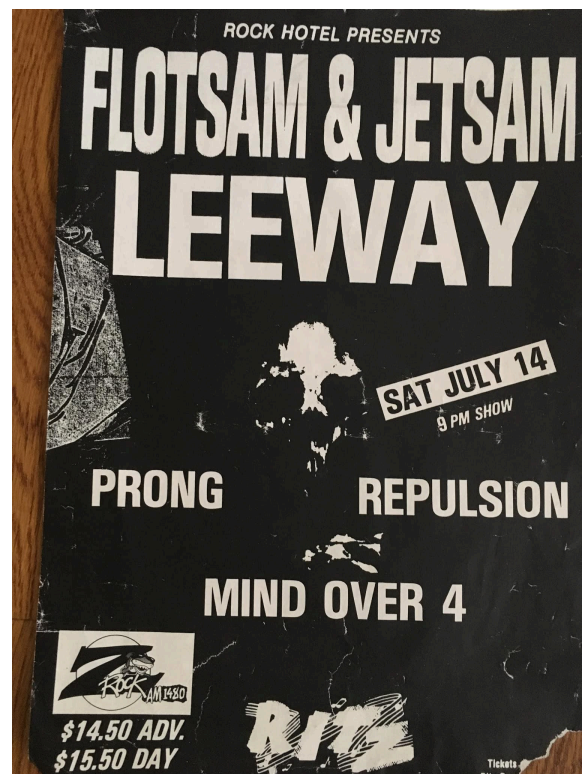


Edward in the crowd at CBGB's (far left, black shirt)

To get out of my depressive state, my friend Ray P (aka Rayco) supplied me with a huge white jar of "Christmas Trees" which is the street term for Dexamyl. Dexy's (as in Dexy Midnight Runners) were marketed as "diet pills" but were basically

pharmaceutical speed. I dropped all of my Haldol weight and was riveted to the gills! The feeling of energy flow made going to shows or working on fanzines a treat. One day, I went over to Ray's parents' house, and we listened to "*Highs in the Mid Sixties-Volume 2 Riot on Sunset Strip*" and The Zero Boys, "*Vicious Circle*." Ray and I loved 60's obscure garage punk and psychedelic bands. He turned me on to The Minutemen from San Pedro, California and the Big Boys from Austin Texas. I reciprocated by making a mixtape featuring the West Coast Experimental Pop Band, The Angry Samoans, Vom and the Redd Kross. We both loved tripping and walking around Ditmars in Astoria goofing on the normal and playing outdated video games at the local pool hall. Great times!

In 1985, I became Leeway's booking agent; manager was too strong of a word for my selected duties that included photocopying flyers, reviews and a short-typed bio with an 8x12 glossy band photo and contact information. These press kits would be hand delivered or mailed to clubs, booking agents and fanzines. The early gigs came easy as Hardcore was starting to shift into more mainstream Heavy Metal, while orthodox metal bands were speeding up tempos and losing the spandex and tiger stripes for a more blue-collar conventional street look. By 1984, Metal and Hardcore merged into "Crossover" a genre lead by bands Suicidal Tendencies, Nuclear Assault, Napalm Death, D.R.I., Hyrax, Anthrax, S.O.D., Corrosion of Conformity and of course Leeway.¹



¹ There are several podcast video interviews on YouTube with Eddie Pomponio "Sutton" about Leeway that are accurate as far as the history of Astoria and the hardcore/metal scene that grew in the 1980's-90's. But Eddie fails to provide any of the memories of "pre" Leeway history. The band was originally called "The Unruled." Since I read Maximin Rock and Roll fanzine

At this time, I was spending time with Big Stick as well as AJ who lived two blocks walk from John and Yanna's place. Both bands were gaining traction in different genres, and it was a big inspiration to watch the creative process evolve across Astoria. I asked AJ if he would be interested in an opening theme or introduction we could play before the band's opening number. I would bring him samples of electronic and avant-garde compositions from Ligeti, Iannis Xenakis, Wendy Carlos and Perrie Schaefer. I brought the soundtracks from the films "Altered States" and "Videodrome" over to his apartment. He told me he liked the music and ideas, but would rather I write and compose something that could possibly be used on a future Leeway album. He said, "copyright clearance is costly." And he emphasized the benefits of being credited on the recordings, "you should write the intro, something dramatic." After being around John Gill and AJ, my confidence grew, I felt more empowered to construct my own music and soundscapes.

I recruited a graphic street artist Bevin Stone to design the first demo tape and debut album "*Born to Expire*" on the newly formed Rock Hotel label run by Chris Williamson. Things were going well for the band. We just returned from Baltimore where the band played The Loft with D.R.I. and Raw Power on tour from Italy. The place went crazy, and the headliners were great people. The next show was a Rock Hotel Production at Ritz in New York City. I had a start-up t-shirt silk-screen company out of my grandfather's house in Astoria. My first three designs were Charles Manson, Jim Jones and a J.G. Ballard "Crash" limited edition on a gray tee. I offered to print up some basic Leeway shirts for the gig at the Ritz. The band was supporting Exodus from the Bay Area in Northern California and who were huge, we all knew The Ritz would sell out. So, I went to work, printing up 100 shirts from small to XX-large. When Leeway and I arrived at The Ritz for load-in and

monthly, I became aware of a Canadian band with the same name and thought as the band evolved the name would be limiting, so I chose "Leeway" as an alternative, A.J. liked it and it stuck. Also, the band used to practice in drummer's Saso Motroni garage, usually without Jose present due to the distance between Astoria and Flushing where Jose lived and he did not drive. He also claims to have told Jose Ochea that they were replacing him with Zowie. Half true... It was Eddie's idea, but I told Jose over a pizza lunch on St. Marks Place that he was out. I was Jose's friend and was acting as a go-between for the band. Guitarist A.J. Novello was uncomfortable with dropping Jose, so I stepped in. Just setting the record straight.

soundcheck, I started to place the shirts on a table in the lobby from a black trash bag. Security asked me what I was doing. "*Selling shirts,*" I replied. "*Nope. Take the shirts out of the club. NOW!*" What I didn't know is that the management of the Ritz demanded \$100 upfront for any merchandise sold in the lobby. I didn't have the money, nor would I pay The Ritz one fucking dime after the Black Flag police riot in 1982, where many fans were boxed in and assaulted by the NYPD, "Police Story," indeed! No doubt rumors were true that this club was a mob front.

I stuck the bag in the back of one of AJ's amplifiers and headed for the dressing room. When Leeway hit the stage, I took the bag and went out into the crowd, who were moshing and were totally into the band. After two songs back-to-back the audience roared as singer Eddie Sutton addressed the crowd with a thank you, the whole band looked relieved and drummer Saso clicked off, "Self Defense" with his drumsticks. The action in the mosh pit was furious as the music chugged away. I pulled a t-shirt out of the bag and held it up on the edge of the pit. The first one sold in seconds, soon I was being mobbed with fists of currency, I took whatever was offered and I had no time to make change as paper exchanged cloth, it was a great feeling of mutual success for both Leeway and me.

Suddenly, I felt hands under both armpits as I was lifted off the dance floor. I thought I was being jacked by some hoodlums for the cash. Then I saw the flashlights and I knew it was Ritz security. They pushed through the crowd towards the main entrance while carrying me. A hand snatched the bag as we entered the lobby. I heard a voice from behind me say; "*Throw him out hard!*" I was tossed down The Ritz's front stairs and landed on my back and shoulder. I limped back to the band's van and leaned against the cargo doors. I was a bit dazed and wanted to wait outside for the rest of the show. I saw some people I knew walking past me and told them Leeway was on stage. Some asked what happened due to my wincing. I said I just got bounced literally out of The Ritz. "*For what?*" I replied, "*I was selling shirts on the floor.*" while explaining the Ritz's policy on merchandise. So much for capitalism and entrepreneurialism.

A few weeks after the show, I started a side project playing bass, with AJ on guitar, and Alan Bazin, drummer for Ludichrist called INRI (I'm Nailed Right In). The

music was basic sludge metal with slow repetitive power chords, bended notes, pounding drums, and screamed vocals, best comparison would be Eyehategod meets Kilslug. We rehearsed several times. However, the bass guitar neck I was using was so warped and the tuning pegs were worn that it was impossible to keep the bass in tune. By the end of each song the music sounded like crap. AJ was busy writing new material for Leeway, and I felt bad that Alan had to come into Queens from Long Island for rehearsal, so we stopped. It was fun to get loud and play music with some friends. I was still collecting material for Helltown Inc. and was trying to merge soundscapes with doomy sludge rock. Time went on, and the tape recorders rolled but nothing became of the band.

My attraction to heavy metal was its incredibly tight structure, much like symphonic music. Many desperate parts that all work together to create songs. However, heavy metal and punk were extremely limited. There was no exploratory space in these genres. Classic rock, prog rock and Kraut rock were able to loosen up the structure and expand into newer shapes, into different expanding exploratory directions. For one of the best American examples, I refer to the Grateful Dead, who can take any song, original or cover, and stretch it into a completely different composition. Even further out, you have the experimental bands that embraced a sort of jazz approach and moved into atonality. Punk did not have this flexibility. Greg Ginn tried to move Black Flag away from short aggressive song structures to instrumental jams, which he explored later in his side project Gone. These expanding parameters were exciting to me. I began to think of music structures in these terms.

By 1984, I was already drifting from the Hardcore scene, and was spending more time working on my own music. The "band" identity was wearing thin, and I wanted to work as a solo artist, or in collaboration with other like-minded experimental artists. I tried to entice some neighborhood friends and some of my PS-1 friends to organize live performances under the Helltown Incorporated moniker. But due to time schedules or disinterest it never came together. I was undeterred and continued recording and planning future shows throughout the city.



Edward at a Meat Puppets show (far right, black jacket) circa 1984

***HARDCORE HIGH: WITNESS TESTIMONY FROM ANTHONY
COMUNALE (RAW DEAL / KILLING TIME)***

I first met EJ within the first few days of freshman year of high school at St. John's prep in Astoria, Oregon. I was walking down a corridor between classes wearing my jacket with a Sex Pistols patch, safety pins and a few punk band pins. I see this guy with a crew cut walking towards me and ask if I'm into punk. I say yes. He asked if I like hardcore as well. Up to that point I had never heard of hardcore. I knew the Dead Kennedys but I didn't know it was considered hardcore. The next day he comes in with a cassette and gives it to me and tells me to give it a listen. It blew my mind and pretty much changed my life. He opened up a world of music and bands on the cutting edge of a new music style. Led me to finding a great scene and friends that we still have to this day. As well as playing in a few bands since then. I always remember Ed as a witty talented envelope pushing artist who could always find a way of

shocking you. I thank him for the years of friendship and wish him the best on this new endeavor.

HARDCORE HIGH: WITNESS TESTIMONY FROM ADAM "TOMMY DOG" PRINZ

When the word hardcore became a line in the sand it didn't just draw kids who wanted their punk harder and faster but it attracted some who saw that noise as something to break down more sound barriers. EJ who was already on his mission of imbibing everything that would decades later define alternative culture. In the early 80's this was deep underground and there were no road maps and those of us climbing through record bins didn't give a fuck about what rule makers might define as cool.

EJ was on the highest level of explorer, fan and a doer looking for the right outlet for his artistic vision. He went to shows, he talked to people, he wrote bands and he constantly listened and read.

A rare bird might fly high, might fly low but it will fly on its own trajectory to where it intends to roost.

PRANKS, POLICE, PROBLEMS, & NEAR MISSES

"Do not accept responsibility for their impression of you."

– Steve Aylett (from The Trickster Brick creative card collection)

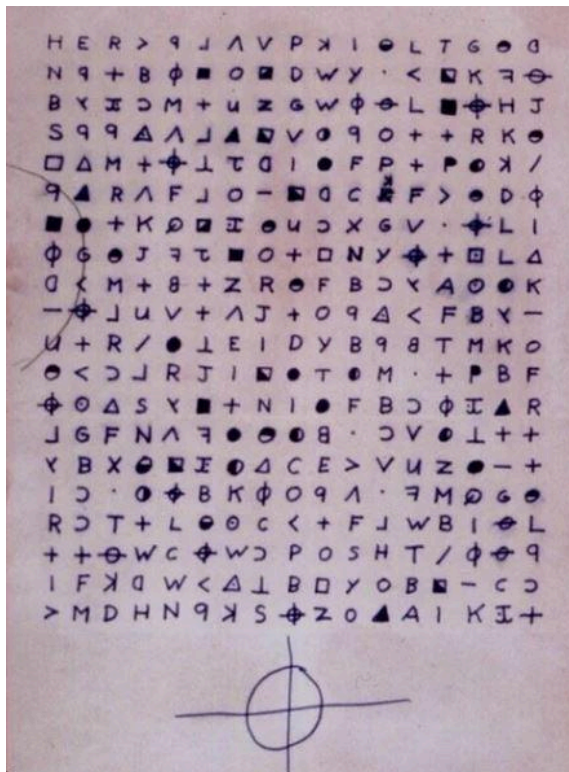
My general animosity towards so called "normalized" society started to grow. I started to hate and disagree with everything that I held pure to heart. I even saw most of the hardcore punk scene as being watered down and full of straight edge jock goons, or lame crossover metal bands, where was the outrage? There was division throughout each sub-scene and lots of unhelpful tension that spilled over into factional violence. I didn't write off the hardcore punk or metal scenes, I just thought

there was something else out there, something more than music and adopted tropes of fashion and ersatz ideologies. All deviant underground scenes were already marginalized *prima facie*, why all this negativity and shunning? I decided that the greater macro society was the true target of ridicule, all the bullshit in the different scenes were mimicking the same tropes and virtues and values that the general public exhibited. I wanted to attract controversy and a benign threatening stance against the mundane and stupid mall shoppers and the so-called normalized citizens.

I went through a serial killer/mass murderer phase like any typical misanthropic youth, collecting cheap paperback shock journalism on the lives of Ted Bundy, John Wayne Gacy and others. Through the grapevine, I found out that serial killer Edmund Kemper read books on tape as a service to the blind, he was being incarcerated at the Vacaville Medical facility in California, so I wrote to him with a list of requests of books, everything from, "*The Savage God*," by Alvarez to Pinocchio. Edmund Kemper returned a polite letter but informed me he didn't have the power to select what material could be transcribed to audio tape. "*Due to the circumstances, I'm forbidden to take requests, but thanks for your interest! - Ed*" So,

unfortunately that never materialized. I did start writing and receiving letters from John Wayne Gacy and developed a decent correspondence with him. Most of the letter's content was a plea of total innocence and being framed by the Chicago Police Department, how he was a loving family member and had many nephews and nieces that he missed and was constantly hawking his paintings, John even had a catalog of a variety of iconic characters such as Mickey Mouse, quite a cottage industry for Pogo the Clown!

Inspired by the milieu Apocalyptic culture and with my copy of Re/Search's "*Pranks*"



as my play book, and in the spirit of Monte Cazazza, Jeffery Vallance, and Boyd Rice, I photocopied at least 200 copies of the Zodiac killer's cryptic letters to the San Francisco police out of a true crime paperback book I purchased at a pharmacy, rubber stamped my PO box to Mind Over Matter Productions, and started placing them in mail slots and under windshield wipers throughout Queens, Brooklyn, and Staten Island. I disseminated hundreds over a two-month period (*see photo on previous page.*))

One Saturday morning, there was a knock on the front door. My mother asked me to come into the living room where two detectives were standing. One of them had my Zodiac killer flyer in hand, "*We'd like to ask you a few questions.*" I was shocked. "*So, what is Mind Over Matter and why are you leaving these flyers around the city?*" Both detectives were stone faced. I tried to explain that this was a promotional stunt to gain attention to my art and music projects. "*That's not a very smart idea,*" one of the detectives said. After a few back-and-forth questions, they left. My mother was obviously worried, concerned I was looking for attention, and perhaps going down a bad path. I tried to assure her that this was just a prank that backfired. She suggested I get full time work somewhere other than the museum.

My friend Dito Monteil² was trying to secure a record deal for his new band Gutterboy. He was close to Michael Alago³ who was on the New York underground art and music scene since the 70's and was now a force of nature in the record industry and was directly responsible for securing and signing Industrial legends SPK, as well as White Zombie and Metallica, to Elektra records. I tagged along with Dito to several meetings with Micheal and crashed at Micheal's place in lower Manhattan while Dito's apartment sat. It was cool to get up in the morning and already be in the city. Michael had an amazing record collection which Dito said I had access to, so I made a dozen mix tapes of rare albums, everything from Nina Simone to early No Wave artists lost in the whims of time and circumstance.

² Dito Monteil's story from neighborhood tough kid to songwriter, author and film director is a full story in itself. His autobiographical book and film *A Guide To Recognizing Your Saints* contains many references and anecdotes from the same early to mid-80's era Astoria Queens.

³ There's a great documentary about Micheal Alargo called, *Who The Fuck Is That Guy?* which is a good piece of DTNY history.

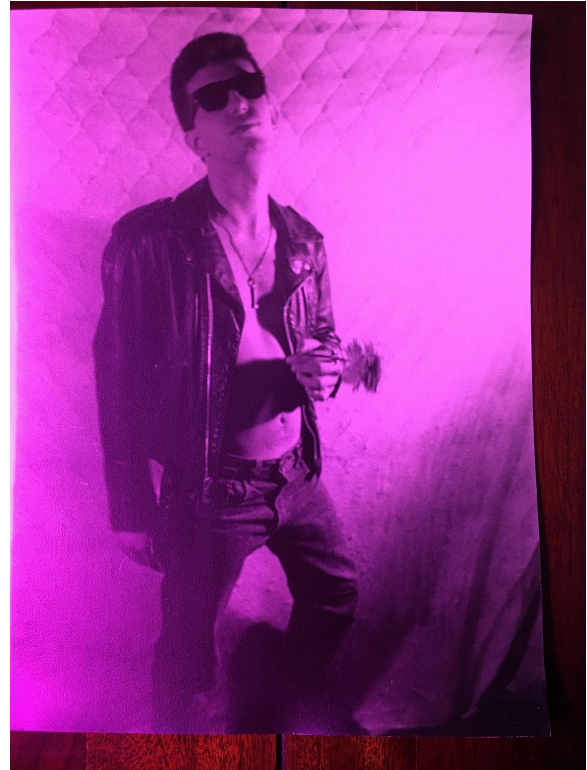
Around this time, Dito and I would frequent the Zen Center to meet up with Allen Ginsberg whom Dito befriended through the circuit of friends and personalities. I wanted Dito to set up a straight up business meeting with Michael so I could pitch Helltown Inc. and try to get a tentative demo deal through a major label. From what I understood, a label will absorb the cost of a professional demonstration tape recording of potential artists with a known producer to have a better and marketable product to option to a subsidiary label. I knew enough about house, trance, and industrial dance music to put decent and listenable songs together in a proper studio. The songs would be drum machine sequencer and sample heavy to appease both label and consumers alike.

Dito suggested that I raise the bar to become more visible: *"You know I love anything you do, but honestly, you have to be shocking and stand out. Otherwise, you're just another guy doing outsider art. I'll set up a meeting but you should go all out."* So, we planned to go up to DGC which was David Geffen's imprint company in midtown Manhattan. It wasn't a meeting with Michael as I requested, but I took my friends' advice and we planned a disruptive office event. As we took the elevator up, I pulled off my sweat pants and shirt, Dito held my clothes smiling like the devil, and I bolted out of the doors and through the front lobby and offices while running nude, and painted white while wearing a ski-mask through the offices tossing demo tapes with my phone number scrawled on the cover before being nabbed by security and sent through the revolving doors with a paper towel to cover my junk. Dito was still on his way down, so I had to wait outside in front of the building until he showed up. We both had a big laugh about it, but my unsolicited demo went nowhere.

In 1989, Nine Inch Nails were recently signed to TVT. Dito and I were mutual acquaintances with Patti Joseph who was the head of A&R. We knew Patti from a few years earlier during our Hardcore days. Patti was friendly, but all business and I doubted she would be interested in signing an all-experimental music project. But I stopped by TVT's office and handed her my homemade press kit and demo tape with some faith and hope. A week later Dito and I stopped by, and I asked if she got a chance to hear the tape; *"I did,"* Patti said with a genuine smile. *"But it's not what TVT is interested in pursuing at this time, but thank you EJ, good luck."* Then Patti

mentioned a few labels including Wax Trax. Patti was very formal but nice, and I felt a bit awkward perhaps putting her on the spot as if asking for a serious business hook-up. But I wanted her professional opinion and, in the end, it was cool and I thanked her.

It was around this time I became tempted to add drum machines and sequencers to most of the Helltown Inc. material and start pumping out 4/4 dance beat-oriented music, leaving some tracks as interludes or experimental filler. SPK, Severed Heads, Cabaret Voltaire were already a decade deep in the Industrial dance genre and labels supporting that genre were sprouting up all over the states.



Edward's electro-industrial era

*PRANKS, POLICE, PROBLEMS, & NEAR MISSES: WITNESS TESTIMONY
FROM DITO MONTIEL*

I never really liked music all that much. A song here and there from Tom Waits or the bad brains did do it for me but it was always more about the setting. the location. the idea. the differentness. the... art. A difficult word for kids from Queens to embrace.

So let me tell you how I found my way to art. The only shows I would never miss growing up were Bad Brains and whatever Eddie (EJ) was doing. I'd tried every way I could to get myself out there with visions of grandeur but was never moved by anyone's... art as much as Eddies. Not even close.

Like anything special, I didn't know what to make of it most of the time. I certainly liked the time he covered the audience with a huge garbage bag filled with locusts

after luring the audience closer and closer with a "what's in the bag" accompanied by blaring and BLARING metal on metal (and I mean real metal as in the element) sounds.

One of the greatest afternoons ever was holding the elevator door open and his clothes as he ran naked through Geffen records in a clear mask throwing blank cassettes at big rockstar A&R executives.

And years after a show where the whole show was to play at such a low tonal volume that no one would realize the show just came and went.

All these years... of laughter, madness, delight, utter confusion and in the end... pure admiration for the person who led me to that ever elusive taboo word... art.

I still look forward to one show whenever it happens – Eddie's. And when I can't I put on his music and I can see that clear incredibly crooked path he paved for me toward that dirty word.

*PRANKS, POLICE, PROBLEMS, & NEAR MISSES: ADDITIONAL
TESTIMONY FROM EDWARD GILES*

Dito's 2017 film, "The Clapper," about the exploits of one "Eddie Krumble" (played by Ed Helms) is based on my struggle to gain employment as a television extra when I first moved to Hollywood, California. I also had a side hustle with a sketchy character named Vitaly who set up focus groups, marketing research and mock trials where I often went incognito and complete with several fake id's courtesy of the Boyle Heights corner boys. BTW...the film is only 15% accurate and strays FAR from the real story I explained to Dito. I was very disappointed with the lack of art and humor the character portrayed. I thought the experimental performance art fails that I did, and poor choice of the film's love interest instead of my real-life girlfriend (a confrontational artist that challenged the public with guerrilla style art attacks with her collective "*Dispute Resolution Services*") would've been a great sub-plot and raise

questions about love and relationships, art, commerce, consumption of entertainment and marketing.

I also wanted to meet actors Ed Helms and Tracy Morgan and talk a little bit about a scam I had that involved marketing research, focus groups, mock trials, and clinical trials to test medications for income. There was a whole side hustle involving me and several extra/background actors that had a private directory of recruiters that were in on the scam. I used wigs, fake beards, crutches and beach balls (to look portlier) as disguises. Some groups for high end products and services like automobiles and luxury cruises could pay up to five hundred dollars, all I had to do was to read up on the topic in trade magazines or Consumer Report, Wired and other trade magazines and proceed to bullshit my way through a ninety-minute focus group. I hoped my discussions with Dito would help develop the main character – I had envisioned a comedy of sorts whereas the final product was a traditional love story devoid of irony complete with a happy ending. As if.

Unfortunately, none of those details were scripted in and I never got to meet Helms or Morgan. But, I'm still grateful for being acknowledged through film, but it's way, way off anything factual. But that's show business. So much *business* that despite an interview on YouTube with my friend Dito explaining the book and film is about me, in the film credits a note appears that the film is not based on any real person.

EARLY SHOWS

Helltown Incorporated approached the art-music scene with a proverbial chip on its shoulder, attitude and some sort of message, no matter how offensive, erroneous or off putting was par for the course. I resented the ego-tripping of bands, certain artists that thrive on a faux controversy to gain audience and critical appeal, as well as the annoying fan geek mentality of the 70's and started to see it in the underground music scene, it spawned from the same hierarchy of what passes as "cool" or "art." And what artists have privilege over others, the natural pecking order was

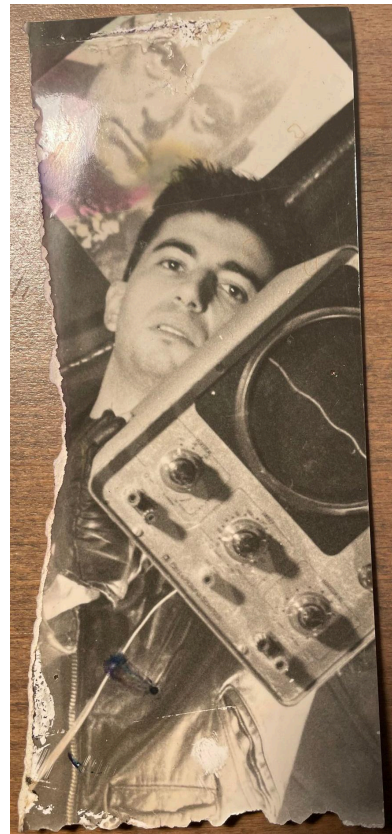
ubiquitous, and I learned there was no avoiding the hegemonic power of those with the simple equation:

$$S \int_{CC}^{SC} Fi$$

[S=Success, CC=Cultural Capital, SC=Social Capital, Fi=Financial Capital]

"Success is a function of cultural capital taken to the limit of social capital, amplified by financial capital" (Southgate, 2023).

The Lismar Lounge on First Avenue was a dive bar with a PA and stage in the basement. It was a local haunt for local bikers and other citizen creeps of the Lower East Side, it was also one of the easiest venues to book as they never held showcases or asked for a demo. I picked up an odd Wednesday supporting Bloodsuckers from Outer Space, they were a wild underground band with costumes and stage props and part of the growing "Scum Rock" movement. A few members from the underground rock band Cycle Sluts from Hell were hanging out with one of their bandmates who worked the downstairs bar. The Cycle Sluts were gaining local traction from a couple of recent notable shows at the Limelight and Cat Club and were enjoying the buzz of positive press and a bright future ahead. The soundman was on board as I gave a brief description of how loud I wanted the house system and how I wanted the stage lights cut to dim. He obliged as I started.



All seemed well, the sound was at top volume as I played a tape of "*Repetition*" I heard yelling and looked up to see a dozen or so middle fingers and angry faces. The track stopped to silence, and "Temper Temper" came blaring out of the house

monitors. About a minute in, I felt the ice cubes hit me like being pelted by hail. I saw one of the Cycle Sluts retreating after throwing ice, but I persevered until I heard what sounded like a "wizz" fly past my right ear and heard the *thunk* of a shot glass hit the wall behind me. By this point, I saw what looked like a phalanx of bikers that usually drank upstairs near the front window keeping watch over their motorcycles cross armed and not happy with my set. I had some trepidation as I thought about my exit strategy to get out of the club by going past the bikers. The club had old metal cargo doors that led from the basement to the sidewalk, and bands usually used the steps to load in. I started to chant, "*Temper! Temper!*" through the house microphone while I suddenly stopped the tape and grabbed the gear off the table, backed up and went up the basement steps and out to the street and made a quiet getaway down First Avenue to the subway on Houston Street and home to Queens.

For the most part, the stratification between "rock" and "art" in Manhattan followed a simple divide; Rockers played the clubs and bars and the arty/jazz performers played lofts, galleries, and basements. The irony was so many rock bands in New York were verging on performative art already. The difficult music that was rhythmless, dissonant, and at times an assault on the audience became more marginalized in the mid 80's. The so-called "No Wave" art-rock movement that became the backbone to the Manhattan art crowd was very insular and was as bad, if not worse, to negotiate and organize shows with than the more established clubs. It was a double negative when it came to booking shows, if it wasn't for friends, Helltown Inc. would have been just another project doing abstract sound with mildly edgy overtones. What I wanted to achieve was a full-blown Gestalt on the senses using audio/visual overload to break the defensive barriers down in tame, passive audiences.

But it wasn't Helltown Inc.'s DNA to sugarcoat the bizarre and often harsh reality of life in the big city. To take a studio project to the stage and get a response positive, negative or otherwise was the challenge many artists take on. The enemy was always boredom and conformity.

FANZINES

"We must take the best from the left and the right to devise a new strategy for the 21st century. The reluctance of professors to speak out against rampant abuses committed on their side (suppression of free speech) has simply increased the power of the right."

– Camille Paglia, 2011

The more I explored, the more I discovered, and fanzines were the telegraph for the alternative community. There were dozens of zines that covered music and disseminated new and unique information, everything from Feminist ideals and Marxism to how to hack the system and organize "direct action" protests against corporations. The zines were funny, irreverent, and often extremely personal. The editorials were heartfelt and sincere even if a bit solipsistic and self-aggrandizing at times.

In 1981 I saw Even Worse played live, and I chatted up Rebecca K. and Jack Rabid who was also the publisher/editor of The Big Takeover fanzine that covered the New York punk scene with some news about other cities and highlighted touring acts. I would see a small batch for sale at the original Rat Cage Record store in the cellar of 171 A studio where many of the early hardcore bands recorded. One night we were outside of CBGB's, Jack with a stack of the latest issue, when he said he needed help organizing the next issue, with that I volunteered to come over and help the next night. Jack lived on Eldridge Avenue off Houston Street. He buzzed me in and sat crossed legged at the foot of his mattress and layered the photocopied pages in numbered page order and stapled them together while listening to classic records by the Saints, Pagans, Adverts, Dickies, Rik L. Rik, and Black Randy's Metro Squad. Legendary LA drummer Nicky Beat was a house guest while in town and Dr. Know stopped into chat. Jack and I worked on the Big Takeover several times on a loose schedule between Even Worse shows and helping his friend Tim Sommer with a new program on WNYU called "Oi the Show" that spotlighted the latest records from

both punk and hardcore bands for half an hour every Tuesday evening. I helped several more times before our schedules prevented our meetups. I'd often see Jack at many early NYHC shows as well as older punk bands that had their own lane in the club circuit. He was always friendly and excited to see live music.



Archival scans of Guillotine fanzine issues #1 and #8. Kraut and Nihilistics are mentioned in detail throughout the “Hardcore High” chapter of this text.

At the same time, I started to see Wendy Eager, editor of Guillotine fanzine at many of the same shows. She lived in Jackson Heights with her boyfriend Paul, and we would often ride back to Queens on the subway chatting and gossiping while having strength in numbers (Punks were always being harassed by the squares on the subway). One night Wendy asked me if I had any time to come over and visit her and Paul at their apartment. After a meeting I took on role of interviewer for Guillotine for shows Wendy couldn't make, she would also gift me tons of records labels sent to her for review (this was how I discovered and eventually befriended John Gill and Yanna Trance from Big Stick who were living in Astoria Queens). During the year of

being on the staff of Guillotine, I interviewed touring acts Ruin, The Descendants, Social Unrest, Die Kruetzen, as well as local favorites Ed Gein's Car back at Wendy's space.

Wendy could be a bit demanding at times, and a little hesitant to expand Guillotine past the genre of hardcore/punk. There were amazing bands such as Demo Moe, Phantom Tollbooth, Blind Idiot God, Band of Susans, and Reverb Motherfuckers as well as many No Wave artists crawling all over the city. One afternoon I invited her to see the Ventures at the Lone Star Café. She met me and with press credentials we made it through the revolving doors for free. I was somewhat of a regular at the Lone Star as I tried to see as many legends as possible before they retired or passed away. I was able to see John Prime, J.J. Cale, Leon Russell, Leon Redbone and NRBQ. The staff was always friendly, the beer was cold and the sound mix was always on point. Meanwhile, in Queens, Sindo Lamas a mutual friend and schoolmate of A.J. from Leeway was starting a "Funzine" called "The Truth" highlighting the local crossover metal-hardcore scene and wanted some contributors. So, I jumped on staff, writing short stories and reviews of new records and demo tapes that were piling up at home. The first issue had a photo still of Yul Brynner that I picked up from Jerry Ohlinger's Movie Material Store in Manhattan. We had a great time, reviewing shows, editing, and assembling the Truth.

A DEVIL ON BOTH SHOULDERS

"He desired a troubled indecision on which he might brood until he could shape it at will to a more vague or determinate form, according to the momentary state of his soul."

– Joris Karl Huysman (from the novel *Against Nature*, circa 1884)

Graduating high school proved to be a traumatic experience since I felt safe there and had a sense of order and purpose, it gave me structure and community. I was very divided on what to do with my life; I desired to be an artist like the ones I met at PS-1 and Clocktower galleries. But I had no idea how to go about proceeding to art school

and saying, *"Hi, I want to be a conceptual artist, but I don't have the time to learn about art history, just show me how to do certain things I'm interested in."* It wasn't realistic.

My mother and grandfather always stressed the opportunity of a "city job" as the safest and secure form of employment. My sites were set on the New York Sanitation Department. I knew the trash collectors that worked at my block in Long Island City, and they always seemed happy and told me they always found great items in the trash. I went ahead and took the written and physical test being conducted at the Fresh Kills landsite in Staten Island. I passed and was on a list of potential employees that was over 10,000 plus in length. My chances of being called could be up to five years from now. This was very discouraging, so I took several other city exams and started to study the manual for USPS postal carriers, with the logic that the more opportunities I give myself, the better my chances to land gainful employment. The constant signing up and visiting classrooms for testing became somewhat a pastime, at least my efforts were getting moral support from both Walter and my mother, which was encouraging and gave me the confidence to feel more a part of the family. I was still working at PS-1 full time and got my neighborhood and school friend George a job there. George had several skills and taught me how to put up drywall quickly, which made my jobs at the museum more valuable. Instead of just being a go-for and mover, I was now involved with prepping gallery spaces and working directly with artists.



Edward with his cousin and mother, early 80's

I needed to prioritize what was important; my family or my own personal goals. I tried to balance the time I spent with my mom and brother, and getting music and art finished. That transitional period between being with a family unit and one's own independence is a precarious period of life. After some time, it became impossible to focus or complete any music or art at my parents' house. I started to think my mother's seemingly constant interruptions were a way to run interference to my aesthetic goals. There was no such thing as an easy task, one favor led to another. Trying to hang a picture frame turned into a spackle, sanding and new paint job. Adding antifreeze to the family car became multiple trips to several auto parts stores, it never ended. This was my cue to move out. The whole girlfriend's privacy routine was easily solved with cheap motels that dotted Astoria managed by guys who didn't care about age consent; cash up front was the way of the world, clean sheets and towels thrown in with the rates.

I moved to a one-bedroom apartment in the neighborhood. I felt it was important to be close to the family. I could always help with chores or favors while still having more space and privacy. It worked out fine, but I still didn't have a centralized home studio, and relied on friends and their schedules to get some work done. Some of the tracks on "*This Too Shall Pass*" were done in one take, from beginning to end with some minor effects and equalization for quality and overall evenness of sound applied months, or even years later. This can be heard on the opening track, "Guard with Life," while other layered tracks took weeks to complete and usually sat unfinished or several four tracked cassette tapes that I would shuttle from studio to studio to add more material to.

It was a daunting task to balance work, relationships with girlfriends, recording and family connections in a seven-day week. The diet pills and cocaine I consumed along the way obviously helped the cause, I only wished somebody turned me on to espresso coffee instead of stimulants. I did this balancing act for years before it all came crashing down during the Final Solution period. It was always a rush to the next situation. The torn feeling of being present for my family, and trying to keep the art/music career afloat and visible in a busy, busy city like New York wore me threadbare. But I hung in there taking advice and barbs from devils sitting on both

shoulders while my angels left me flat at the corner of Indecision Avenue and Regret Road in the heart of Helltown NYC.

LEAVING THE MISSING

"The idealist sees hope, the romantic sees doom. The post-modernist sees hope and doom."

– Bauvard

For less than a year during 1987, I was a loose satellite member of Missing Foundation, a notorious agit-prop noise rock band rooted deeply in the Lower East Side of Manhattan. The band was centered around Peter Missing, who I saw with his previous incarnation Drunk Driving. After a few conversations, Peter asked me to meet up with him while he tagged the bands symbol on any wall, telephone booth or park bench we passed, I would often run into drummer Mark Ashwill and Peter in the East Village and would describe my ideas to both of them in the hope of being asked to join their band, they especially liked my suggestion that we cut down telephone poles and trees with a chainsaw.

A good portion of Missing Foundation's notoriety centered around propaganda and street level branding using poster art and the ever-present *inverted cocktail glass*, with slogans such as "Your House is Mine," "1933," and "Demise" scrawled on every piece of real estate in lower Manhattan. Missing Foundation had a seemingly revolving door of past members, including Adam Nodelman, Chris T. former guitarist of the Long Island punk band Nihilistics, and Rebecca Korbet of Bush Tetras. My role in the band was "metal percussionist," and submitted tapes of pure noise and repeated loops. Mark liked the tapes and was the one who actually asked me to show up whenever they performed. Missing Foundation had a bad reputation



and were banned from most legitimate clubs due to the chaos and vandalism that ensued from Peter who was prone to start fires on stage and the ragtag crew of anarcho-provocateurs that were always rowdy and down for destruction.

One of the points that stuck out immediately was that Peter Missing and the band wanted change but with no clear strategy for something better. Causing property damage by spray paint tags and Sharpies and seizing underdeveloped, under used, blighted structures for guerrilla squatting, or collective rent strikes were more harmful than liberating. The Lower East Side, especially Avenue's C and D were in deplorable condition: drug dealers and junkies lived in the same buildings, unchecked crime, stolen or abandoned automobiles and piling trash became the landscape.

As a band, Missing Foundation marginally associated other movements such as Food not Bombs or the old guard Socialist-Communist movement from the 1930's or some of the residue of the ill-fated Yippie Movement that still had presence in Lower Manhattan until the 1990's. I saw no outreach from the band as far as being a pro-activist change agent, or any interest in affordable housing for low or no income families or individuals that have been affected by illness, unemployment, drug or alcohol addiction or abuse. I felt their cause was a bit insincere when it came to real rock-solid solutions. Missing Foundation as protagonist for action may have had good intentions, but it was more nihilistic and a front to be an angry noise rock band if nothing else.

From the onset, Peter Missing was constantly hitting me up for money. I would offer to buy beer, but soon after he wanted cash. I didn't mind and was willing to pay for practice space or rehearsal fees. But I was a little disappointed that Peter didn't inform me about a few shows they performed in the Lower East Side as Peter never called me and shows would often pop up when available with short notice. When it was time to record their second album "*1933 Your House is Mine*," I found out at the last minute by Chris T. who informed me about the recording by calling me from the studio. I jumped on the subway and made it to the studio, as I was walking up to the door Peter caught me outside and said he needed \$200, I assumed for session fees. I can't remember if I had the cash on me, or we went to an ATM, but I do remember that the moment I handed Peter the money he walked to the corner,

turned and I didn't see him for the next half an hour. I wanted to follow him, but I went into the studio with my aluminum bat and can for metal percussion. Most of my time in the band (which was a loose collective of agitators) was going around Manhattan and spray painting the band's infamous symbol, "Party's Over" inverted cocktail glass on literally any surface, public or private. There were hundreds of MF's symbols throughout all five boroughs and agit-prop posters calling for the death of landlords and the abolishment of private property. The NYPD had Missing Foundation on their radar for years and were suspected of provoking the famous Thompson Square Park riot of August 1988.



One of my fondest memories was of a Sunday afternoon, when I met Peter outside of Mark's apartment to rehearse at the music building on 14th Street and 1st Avenue. Mark came down to meet us with a drum kit, the hardware and cymbals in a gunny sack and an amp for Peter who had a damaged looking guitar and his trusty bullhorn. The plan was to walk about a half a mile to the building. I held the amp and my gear that I had in a knapsack. After several blocks, I became exhausted and offered to pay for a taxi ride to and from the practice space. Peter protested, saying something about not giving money to cabbies. I ignored him and hailed a slow cruising cab off Avenue A. We popped the trunk and put all of the gear in the back, Peter jumped in the front seat while Mark and I took the rear passenger seats. The driver was mellow and asked Peter if he was a musician to which Peter retorted with directions to the building. The driver hit the meter and we were on our way while listening to some Afro-Cuban music on a local station at a decent volume. About 2 blocks from the building, the driver and Peter exchanged words I couldn't hear, and Peter took upon himself to snap the radio off. The driver just looked at Peter with astoundment as he pulled to the curb and told all of us to, "*Get the fuck out of the cab!*" Mark and I

looked at each other as the driver opened the trunk and started to unload us right there, no questions asked or answered. I handed the cab driver some bills as he got back in and drove off leaving us there looking stupid. Peter wanted to buy beer for the practice, so we carried gear and beer to the rehearsal building.

After a few more situations, I realized that Missing Foundation was basically the Peter Missing show. I came to my senses and stopped coming around. Peter Missing was not a modern-day Robespierre and his bullhorn was not going to overthrow the system. I was a guy from Queens with a GED and a shitty attitude, what the fuck was I going to do trying to fight some bureaucratic monster with an obnoxious idealist who treated common people poorly while claiming to defend so badly understood concept of diplomacy? It seemed romantic at the time, but I needed another gig that worked with, not against my goals, so I left the Missing.

In 1987, Chris T. and Vince from Missing Foundation started a short-lived side project called Wrench. I wanted to continue to work in a musical structure with a band. I joined in with my tapes and sampler, we rehearsed for about six months, but nothing came of it. Many of the tapes and samples I used were also used as the template for Helltown Inc. tracks. I was in a flux of direction; I devoted a lot of time developing sounds and trying new approaches. Helltown Inc. was fine and took priority over any peripheral project I worked on, but I thought working with or even through a full band was my best option. The temptation to go Industrial dance was still lingering when I invested in a Roland TR-707 drum machine in 1985. The idea was to combine tape and found sound samples with a driving beat. Some of the early demos were partially completed in professional studios at very expensive rates. After listening to the results, I heard nothing of interest. It was a highly polished turd, generic and uninteresting. I brought the master reels to my parent's house in Queens and shelved them.

I was tempted to take an ad out in the Village Voice seeking like-minded musicians. I tried to corral friends from the neighborhood to work with me, but they were interested in going out to clubs in Long Island. They all had full time jobs that required physical labor, so the last thing they wanted to do was be bogged down in a studio or doing any more work. For my local friends it was all muscle cars, beer, pot

and chasing after women. I did convince a few friends to come to a rehearsal space under the name Bludgeoned.⁴ The idea of having two bruisers out front while I did all of the music was interesting and the songs were coming along. But time slipped by and we never set up a show, so it was back to square one.

*LEAVING THE MISSING: WITNESS TESTIMONY FROM CHRIS TSAKIS
(NIHILISTICS)*

I met EJ circa 1981 at a Manhattan gig featuring my band Nihilistics (sometimes called "The Nihilistics"). My friend Mike Nicolosi (RIP) and I started the band in high school (I'd been playing guitar for years and taught Mike how to play bass) after discovering The Clash, Damned, Sex Pistols, Ramones, et al. Initially, we couldn't settle on a name for the band or hang on to a singer or drummer but by 1980 we'd found Ron (vocals) and Troy (drums) and I'd discovered the word "nihilistic" in some Jean-Paul Sartre book.



Nihilistics performing live at the Joseph Papp Theater, circa 1982

⁴ Bludgeon was also the earliest song that Final Solution worked on and was a holdover from the Bludgeoned project, later intended for Greg Scott to sing. After a few rehearsals, Greg started doing the vocals on Bludgeon and was usually the highpoint of Final Solution gigs.

EJ was one of the scrappy independent NYC born-and-bred teenagers who'd go everywhere on the subway and was constantly popping up to see Nihilistics on those early multi-band NYHC (New York Hardcore) bills at legendary now long-gone venues like CBGB, Max's Kansas City, Mudd Club (Paul Bearer of Sheer Terror was another early fan). EJ was different, though. An astute observer with a finely-honed bullshit detector who mostly kept his own counsel, EJ would weigh in hilariously on a topic and it was always absurdist, well-informed and spot-on. We became friends and were soon hanging out apart from gigs. I'd visit him at his Long Island City (not today's LIC of soaring condo towers with million dollar plus apartments: the Long Island City that still had a Swingline Stapler factory and was a blue-collar enclave) and EJ was hip to so much cool shit he was the first person to show me a VHS video of "Taxi Driver" (we were soon quoting Travis Bickle at length).

The taxi theme reemerged on a night that changed the entire course of my life. The aforementioned Paul Bearer (before he changed his last name) and I were in my recently-purchased (\$800) 1972 Plymouth Sport Fury headed to EJ's place in LIC when I was rear-ended at a red light by a Checker Cab like the one Travis Bickle drove. I was knocked unconscious. If Paul hadn't grabbed the steering wheel and slammed on the brakes from the passenger seat we might've both been killed. The cabbie hit us so hard the left side of the Fury's cavernous trunk was pushed up to just behind the collapsed driver's seat and the driver's door was crumpled shut. Paul and I had to fall out of the passenger door, brushing broken glass from our hair and falling into a pool of slowly-spreading gasoline from the ruptured tank. The cabbie had gone on to take out a fire hydrant and it felt like we were in a Scorsese film as water jetted thirty feet into the sky. Paul and I made our way to EJ's place where his stepfather—a taxi driver!—suggested the female cabbie who hit us might've had "...a bottle stashed under the front seat" (he said it was fairly typical for those driving a late-night shift). I borrowed a camera and went back to the accident scene to take copious pictures for my eventual lawsuit.

The money I eventually won (\$9,000, more money than I'd seen in my entire life) was enough to buy me a nice new stereo from Lafayette (look it up), fund my move out of my mother's house on Long Island and sustain me while I searched for a job

and set up a new life in New Jersey. Things had already gone to shit between the rest of the Nihilistics and myself and I fell out of touch with many of the friends I'd made via the band. Except EJ. We stayed in touch and he'd come and join my friend Kaz and I on our WFMU-FM show "The Nightmare Lounge," kibitzing on air and offering his unique, skewed perspective on American life. No one I know thinks like EJ—a genuine autodidact—and it was inevitable he'd start making music that sounded like nothing I'd heard. We even played together in Missing Foundation and an offshoot band, Wrench. When he moved away from the NYC area EJ and I fell out of touch awhile but when we got back on the phone it was like old times. He'd make wry, off-kilter observations about greedy, grasping inhumane society and we'd fire off the darkest, bleakest jokes imaginable. My favorite people from back in the NYHC days were the ones who didn't take themselves so fucking seriously and understood the tonic good gallows humor provided. Those are the ones I'm still talking with, the ones who help me navigate an increasingly insane world. If you let EJ be your guide the journey will never be dull... and he'll even provide the soundtrack.

*LEAVING THE MISSING: WITNESS TESTIMONY FROM PAUL BEARER
(SHEER TERROR)*

We've been friends since we were teenagers. Met at a Nihilistics show, early '80s.

We both had a penchant for the darker, more morose side of things. A good deal of our friends were thugs, so there was always some inevitable violence. We found nothing wrong with any of that as it often made for a good time, or ridiculous story to tell, later on.

I think Scare Tactic was just a name that EJ put on a flyer to fill out a Final Solution bill. There was no plan, or rehearsal. He just told a bunch of us to show up at the Pool Bar, and bring whatever instrument we wanted. There were eight of us. I think we had three or four guitars, a bass, drums, a keyboard or two, and me, screaming. I think EJ supplied the ski-masks, stockings, and gimp mask (as well as the pellet gun, crickets, goat head, axe, bullwhip & dildos). There are some photos, and a dark video (can't see shit). It was a fun time.

HELLTOWN INC. "THIS TOO SHALL PASS"

EJ had booked a second show, a few months later, at The Bank on Essex & Houston.
We decided to go drinking, instead, and never even went to the venue.



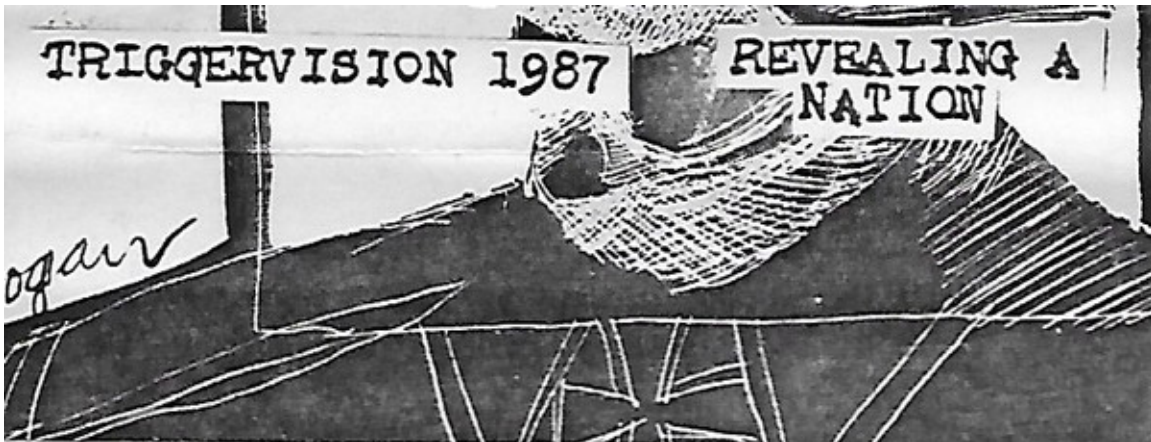
Photos from the first (and only) Scare Tactic gig, featuring EJ Vodka, late 80's

TRIGGERVISION (TV 87-88) / TEMPLE OF SET & AMIEE

"The road to hell is paved with good intentions."

– Samuel Johnson, 1775

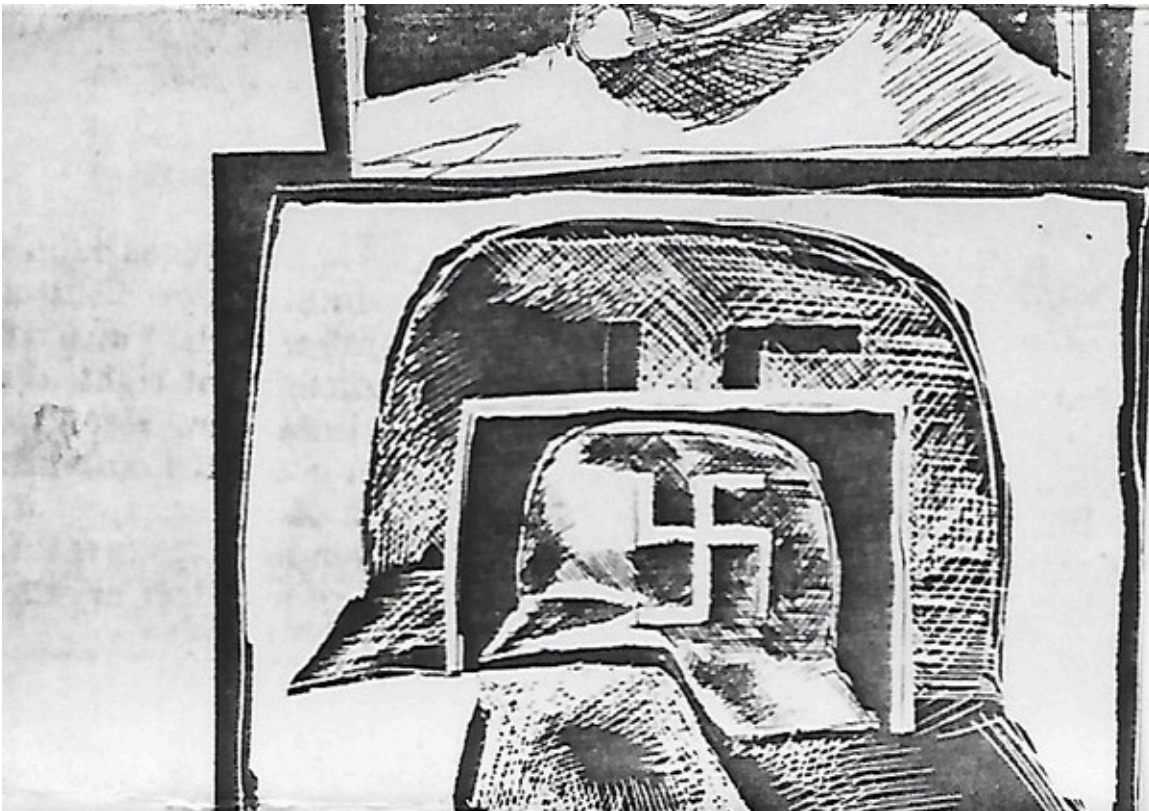
I first met Dan, Brian SET and Krissi in front of CBGB's club one night in the summer of 1987. It was common for people to congregate and mill around outside and listen to the bands while drinking 40-ounce malt liquor rather than fork over the admission fee to go in. Dan had a small attaché case with a variety of tapes he was trying to sell off. He was impressed that I not only knew some of the titles but had some contact with the labels. A conversation started between the four of us and we shared the possibility of working together in the future. I mentioned my affiliation with the Missing Foundation which seemed to impress Brian. I said I wanted to move on from them and really didn't feel like a full member, though I rehearsed and recorded some tracks for the next album *1933 Your House is Mine*.



Brian gave me a copy of the debut Triggervision 1987 tape. I was unsure if this was a demo, or the official release. Besides the "Revealing a Nation" title and list of tracks (all of which were on the A side) there was no personal or contact information on the tapes cover sleeve. I was perturbed by the cover of a soldier with a swastika on the helmet, but if shock is what we're after, the cover art is the place to start! The music was erratic and sloppy with an uneven mix of what sounded like a highly affected

bass guitar and vocals. It was raw, but I heard enough structure to pick out songs. At first, I didn't think I should ask to join, or collaborate. But I was curious and wanted to keep in touch as future allies for a show, or split tape sometime down the road.

As a singer and front man, Dan had charisma and great stage presence, He was the "star" in the making. It was great to see him with a long microphone cord and climb the interior of the venues. As long as Bash and Brian kept the bass and drums locked in tight rhythm, Krissi could improvise her guitar and effects pedals, while I added synthesizer and samples. The more we practiced and performed, the tighter the music became, and our sound fell between early Leather Nun and Neurosis. Heavy fuzzed bass, pounding drums, echoed vocals, it was true angst with a backbeat.



Another distinguishing aspect of TV87 was the bargain-basement audio-visual multimedia component of a huge television and VCR machine the band would lug around and set-up on stage to present montages and loops of visual violence and destruction, one section of the video had a repeated loop of shamed and guilty politician R. Budd Dryer putting a .44 Magnum in his mouth and blowing his head

off and then a quick cut-edit to Elmer J Fudd shooting Daffy Duck in the face. It seems silly, and almost kitsch, but I noticed the stunned reactions of the audience's faces when the band played live. It was that shock appeal and juxtaposition of popular culture's dark side and ever-present danger that I felt was a major difference between Triggervision and the other tri-state bands playing around at that time.

The band's trajectory started to rise as we traveled to DIY shows put on by locals in unique locations. Dan had befriended some of the members of Sink Manhattan from Philadelphia at one of our shows, they were kindred souls that immediately saw Triggervision as an equal in intensity and aesthetic. They invited us to play a show in an abandoned foundry in the industrial section of Philadelphia. Dan had his own microphones and a 200-foot cable to roam off the stage. He climbed to the top of the giant generator yelling out the lyrics as we played below in a din of noise rock, no doubt we made an impression on everyone there. We backed up the success of our road show with a free performance in the basement of Ralphie the Punk's squat in the Lower East Side. The walls were covered in corrosive concrete lime and were hazardous to touch, so the audience huddled around us to avoid contact with the walls of the room. We plowed through several songs, including "Slow Death" by the Leather Nun. Dan was on fire and the band was tight, all our practice paid off.

Although Brian was the leader of the band, I hung out and appreciated Dan who lived one town over from Fairlawn. He had charisma and stage presence that Brian lacked. He took the lyrics seriously and was constantly writing in moleskine notebooks. He was like a muscular Jim Morrison informed by Ian Curtis meets Baudelaire. He also turned me onto great Industrial bands and artists like Jonathan Briley, Coup De Grace, Hunting Lodge, Lustmord, and Nocturnal Emissions.

After our two successful shows in Philadelphia, Dan was ready to move. He didn't want to be trapped in uptight suburban New Jersey any longer, explaining, *"Brian and Krissi are going to settle down one day after all of this and I'd rather be in Philadelphia, there's no future for me here, Philadelphia is a real city, I have connections there."* Dan was already seeing the future of the band and it's potential to live off the music was not a reality. He started to pick up more roofing jobs anywhere in the state, saved up his money and packed his van with personal belongings along

with his notebooks, pedals and microphones and split to the city of brotherly love, where he found a huge loft shared by a few other people he knew, a girlfriend, and steady work with a roofing crew. He was happy and free.



Before Dan left Garfield, we hung out one last time drinking this bottle of blended malt scotch I brought over. As a parting gift, I gave him my double record set of Dylan Thomas reciting poetry at the White Horse Tavern in New York City. We drank scotch and listened to "*Death Shall Have No Dominion*," and several other poems. We also listened to a rare Grateful Dead bootleg from the mid-sixties with four songs sung by Ron "Pigpen" McKernan who Dan admired for his soulful renditions of old ballads. My mind wandered back to Timber Lake Camp and the bunker jams. I lost track of all members of Triggervision after Dan moved and Brian and Krissi eventually broke up and moved back to Fairlawn. A few years went by before I saw Krissi at a bar on Avenue A. She was sitting on a barstool, talking with two guys and looked high, instead of coming over to ask how things were, I finished my drink and left. I never saw her, Brian, or Dan ever again. They were all good people, with good intentions that paved the roads back to Helltown.

THE PSYCHIC WORKSHOP, THE HOPE ORGANIZATION, & PITTSBURGH

"True love casts out all fear, if you fear me there's something wrong with you."

– Charles Manson (interview circa 1987)

Through Triggervision, I met Amice who was a friend of the band and had a side project with Krissi called Noise Control, a guitar and pedal effect duo that ranged from drone to angst. After a rehearsal, we sat and talked on the basement couch for a while, it was getting late, and I asked if I could follow her back to her place to hang out. My two door Camero followed her four door Nova back to Patterson and by morning we were an item. I started to spend more time in New Jersey with Aimee and rehearsed with the band.

I was in steady contact with Peter Sbrockey who lived in Pittsburgh Pennsylvania and ran a tape label called *The Hope Organization* which had a variety of rare Power Electronics such as The Grey Wolves, but specialized in interviews ranging from Boyd Rice (NON) to William Bennett from Whitehouse, Anton LeVay from the Church of Satan, and a host of serial killers from Richard Ramirez to Edmund Kemper, and many Charles Manson and Family related recordings such as live Manson songs from prison and rare recordings of Bobby "Cupid" Beausoleil's rock band he had organized in prison with other inmates. Peter and his girlfriend invited us out and talked up Pittsburgh as a center of art and music.

CONTACT: THE HOPE ORGANIZATION
P.O. BOX 293
PITTSBURGH, PA. 15230
U.S.A.

THE HOPE ORGANIZATION

CHARLES MANSON	TOM SNYDER INTERVIEW	(C-45)
CHARLES MANSON	CHARLIE ROSE INTERVIEW	(C-60)
CHARLES MANSON	UNRELEASED 85 PLUS TODAY SHOW INTERVIEW	(C-60)
CHARLES MANSON	THIRTEEN ORIGINAL SONGS	(C-45)
CHARLES MANSON	"WHITE RASTA" VACAVILLE (Music: poor quality)	(C-90)
CHARLES MANSON	GERALDO INTERVIEW '88	(C-60)
CHARLES MANSON	KALX INTERVIEW (BERKELEY)	(C-90)
CHARLES MANSON & JIM JONES	"19th STATE SPECIAL" (INDIANA)	(C-15)
EDMUND KEMPER	INTERVIEW	(C-20)
HENRY LEE LUCAS	CHARLIE ROSE INTERVIEW	(C-20)
MARK DAVID CHAPMAN	"CATCHER IN THE RYE" INTERVIEW (poor quality)	(C-60)
HUNGERFORD MASSACRE	MASS MURDERER MICHAEL RYAN SPECIAL	(C-60)
RAPE TAPE	SPECIAL ON RAPISTS AND THE USE OF DEPO-PRavera	(C-30)
SATANISM	HUMOROUS 700 CLUB INTERVIEW	(C-30)
SATANISM, MURDER, RAPE & CULTS	KFJC "ONE STEP BEYOND" EXCERPTS	2x (C-90)
ANTON LA VEY	"THE SATANIC MASS"	(C-45)
JAMRA	SPOKEN WORD	(C-30)
ALEISTER CROWLEY	BBC SPECIAL	(C-30)
ALEISTER CROWLEY	"DO WHAT THOU WILT"	(C-30)
THELEMIC RITUALS	SPOKEN WORD	(C-60)
COLIN WILSON	"INSIDE THE OUTSIDERS"	(C-45)
CHARLES BUKOWSKI	"READING AT THE SWEETWATER" APRIL '80	(C-60)
WILLEM DE RITTER	SPOKEN WORD	(C-30)
ANNIE SPRINKLE	SPOKEN WORD	(C-30)
L.S.D.	CAMPY DOCUMENTARY ON THE USE OF L.S.D.	(C-60)
THE PSYCHIC WORKSHOP	"TRANSMISSIONS OF DECADENCE" (7 SONGS)	(C-30)
BETTER AWARENESS THROUGH FEAR	SELF-TITLED (7 SONGS)	(C-60)
KRISTENE AMBROSIA	"SPINNING SIGIL"	(C-15)
THE GREY WOLVES	"ATROCITY EXHIBITION" (18 SONGS)	(C-60)
THE GREY WOLVES	"WHITE TERROR" (4 SONGS)	(C-30)
LOVELACE	"DUSSELDORF NIGHTS" (4 SONGS)	(C-23)
TEEN LESBIANS & ANIMALS	"SORE AZ A WHORE" (12 SONGS)	(C-60)
WHITEHOUSE	ANTIDOTE RADIO INTERVIEW (4-5-86)	(C-90)
WHITEHOUSE	CKLN INTERVIEW JULY '88 (TORONTO)	(C-60)
BOYD RICE	CKLN INTERVIEW (7-30-85) (TORONTO)	(C-60)
THROBBING GRISTLE	INTERVIEW FOR HEATHEN EARTH (AUSTRALIA)	(C-90)
THROBBING GRISTLE	KFJC INTERVIEW ('79 or '80?)	2x (C-60)
PSYCHIC TV	INTERVIEW AT SOME BIZARRE JAN. '84	(C-90)
PSYCHIC TV	K-WEST INTERVIEW (5-31-84) (FRANCE)	(C-90)
PSYCHIC TV	WZBC INTERVIEW (BOSTON)	(C-45)
PSYCHIC TV	CKLN INTERVIEW (5-21-85) (TORONTO)	(C-60)
PSYCHIC TV	CKLN INTERVIEW (10-24-85) (TORONTO)	(C-90)
PSYCHIC TV	WMSE INTERVIEW (8-8-86) (MILWAUKEE)	(C-30)
PSYCHIC TV	WNUR INTERVIEW (8-9-86) (CHICAGO)	(C-60)
PSYCHIC TV	WZRD INTERVIEW (8-9-86) (CHICAGO)	(C-30)
PSYCHIC TV	INTERVIEWS FROM OCT. & NOV. '82	(C-30)
PSYCHIC TV	ANTIDOTE RADIO SHOW INTERVIEW	2x (C-60)
PSYCHIC TV	GEN. PAULA, MONTE INTERVIEW (3-29-88) (SAN FRANCISCO)	(C-30)
PSYCHIC TV	NO OTHER RADIO SHOW INTERVIEW (9-27-88)	(C-90)
PSYCHIC TV	INTERVIEW (Date and origin unknown)	(C-60)
PSYCHIC TV	T.O.P.Y. - U.S. AND G. P.O. INTERVIEW	(C-60)
PSYCHIC TV	"ARCHIVES ONE" VARIOUS INTERVIEWS	(C-90)

NOTE: SOME PROCEEDS FROM THE SALE OF THE PTV INTERVIEWS WILL BE DONATED TO THEE TEMPLE OV PSYCHICK YOUTH-U.S.A.

ALSO, MANY OTHER TAPES AVAILABLE. SEND WANT LIST AND ALL INFORMATION TO THE ADDRESS BELOW:

CONTACT: THE HOPE ORGANIZATION
P.O. BOX 293
PITTSBURGH, PA. 15230
U.S.A.

PHONE: (412) 361-8823

Hope Organization cassette catalog, late 1980's

I wasn't familiar with many of Pittsburgh's cultural offerings other than the Electric Banana which was a hardcore punk venue and a destination for many NYHC bands, Punk outfit Half-Life who played a CBGB's matinee a few times, local experimental ambient project Powder French, P. Children and Monroeville's harsh noise legends Macronympha. There were also plans to open the Andy Warhol Museum and the city

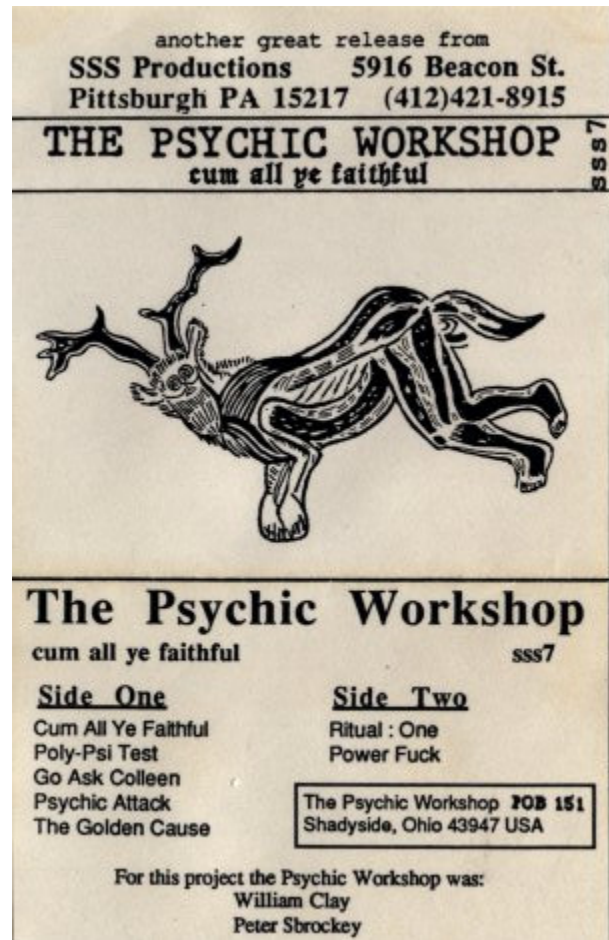
was devotedly loyal to the Pirates, Penguins and Super Bowl winning Steelers. So, we were excited to see what the Pitt had to offer.

Aimee and I planned our first road trip to visit Peter and his girlfriend in the spring of 1988. Peter and his partner just moved into a two-bedroom house right off Forbes Avenue in the heart of Oakland, which is the hub of two main colleges, Peter christened it the "Temple on Semple." Forbes Avenue was flush with bars, clubs, book, and video stores all within walking distance. Aimee and I instantly clicked with Peter and his entourage which included "Big Lee" as big as a Steeler linebacker who lived in the basement, John Crom, a studio engineer and produced a show called "At Home in Pittsburgh" for local public access, and Tony Hadid, a martial art instructor who dealt Ecstasy and acted as the Pitt crew's "muscle." Aimee and I really liked everyone we met through Peter, they were friendly, open, and game for anything. There was no posing or art pretension, they partied but they also got things done.

Our first night there, about a dozen of Peter's crew took us to Chief's bar. Aimee, Peter, and his girlfriend chatted up and after a while we got to know everyone. Tony slipped us some free E as welcome to the Pitt gesture, Aimee and I were having a blast! When we returned to the Temple on Semple, Peter kept the party going and called more friends over. I slipped the "*Mouth of The Night*" record by Psychic TV on the stereo and proceeded to meet Pittsburgh's freak fringe. The next morning Peter made breakfast and we headed over to an upscale bookstore in Shadyside, one neighborhood over and picked up a four volume, leather bound edition of the writings of Aleister Crowley. "*What an amazing find!*" Aimee said. "*We have everything here,*" Peter rejoined as he took us to bookstores and record shops. Aimee picked up a rare Psychic TV bootleg and I found a Motorhead picture disc. Everything was affordable, there was a full-length black leather coat for \$40 at a resale shop, an Army/Navy store with real military collectables (including German Army medals and insignias from World War Two) bars on every corner... Aimee and I were sold.

It was through Peter that we met Manny Theiner who ran SSS Productions, I knew about the label through the usual home tapers and catalogs, and the split Grae.Com / Macronympha record recently played on "Transfigured Night" radio program on

Columbia radio's WKCR channel. Manny was one of those "Noise Weasels" that seem to find their way into the underground scene and sweet talk their way into a comfortable position booking shows and writing for local Pittsburgh City Paper and having ins at Carnegie Mellon's WRC (I am almost certain Manny DJ'd a program at WRCT.) He always knew the right people and was a bit of a gatekeeper for the steel city. Peter and Manny were frenemies even though Peter's Industrial noise project, The Psychic Workshop had one tape on Manny's SSS Production label titled *Cum, All Ye Faithful*. So, chatting up Manny for a possible show was became frustrating, Manny had a great bit of snoot after successfully booking French performance sound brother's Etant Donnes in Pittsburgh recently, and was not the friendliest or welcoming to Peter's guests, "*Manny is cool, but an asshole, he's a cool asshole.*" "*Can he get us a show? We can all be on the same bill. Noise Control, Helltown, and the Psychic Workshop?*" "*Maybe,*" Peter said, "*We can do our own thing if Manny doesn't do it.*"



Amiee, Peter, and I discussed doing music together and were all on the buzz of the new sound of Psychic TV's techno rave records. I told Peter that it was relatively easy to create "techno house music." Peter owned a Roland 505 rhythm composer drum machine, a much smaller version of the 707 I had back home. "*Excellent,*" I said, "*I can create dozens of 4/4 tracks with this.*" I showed Peter how quickly a drum pattern can be tapped in. THUMP /THUMP/THUMP/THUMP with a bit of sighing hi-hat and a snare half way through. "*Bingo!*" Peter loved it. "*I can do this all night.*" "*Okay,*" Peter said, "*Can you come with us to work? It's totally cool, I'm the manager.*"

That night Peter and his girlfriend had to work the graveyard shift at a sleazy adult bookstore called "Roman V." So, with a pair of headphones and the Roland 505. Amiee and I sat in the back office and charted out beats, Aimee produced parts and melodies with a borrowed guitar. By morning we had enough new material for a 12" EP. On our next visit to Pittsburgh, Peter booked time at a small studio, Aimee brought her guitar and gear and I came with a tape recorder, some tapes with sounds and voice samples, and the Casio VL tone synth. The session was four hours long, we worked with the engineer and with some studio magick had some amazing new tracks, they sounded great coming through the studio monitors, and we were all psyched.



Cover of "Better Awareness Through Fear", cassette featuring Peter Sbrockey and William Clay released via Hope Organization in 1988

Peter made a quick mixdown to cassette, called Tony Hadid who asked to meet us at the Upstage, one of Pittsburgh's hottest clubs for live music and dance. Tony knew the doorman who was huge and a member of the Pagans motorcycle gang. Amiee and I were treated to some more Ecstasy and offered speed which we declined. Peter was

able to get our fresh-from-the-studio tape played three times throughout the night. Apart from some tinny highs from Aimee's guitar and a little mid-range blur from a sample I used, it was a club banger. No one refused it and the club danced on!

Aimee and I made several more trips to Pittsburgh including once to help assist Peter with his agreement to house Psychic TV and Don Bolles' band Celebrity Skin when they blew into town. Peter had some outstanding warrants and found himself in jail and was not able to host Genesis, Paula, and the children. Bad juju and bad timing from the laws of magick. Peter's minor infractions with the law also prevented him from meeting John Wayne Gacy when Peter, his new girlfriend, and I drove to Menard Correctional Facility in the southernmost tip of Illinois a few months later. We did not know prior to arriving that felons on prohibition were not allowed to visit inmates, so Peter and his girlfriend waited for two hours in the car while I met with John. He was familiar with me through a five-year correspondence. John was jovial and good spirited and loved to talk about his art and family, which he missed. I wanted to avoid talking about the case to avoid being another crime-murder geek looking for some bragging rights to meeting Pogo the killer clown!

John was forthcoming up to admitting he killed anybody and insisted he was framed by a business partner and the Chicago police department, "*It was a sham trial. My attorneys appealed before I was sentenced! I had witnesses that never testified due to the prosecutor's intimations.*" John pleaded his case over commissary popcorn. The creepiest moment is when he slipped and called the boys "property" and caught himself by going silent to reset, it was that one moment where I looked into his eyes and saw John the killer. His whole demeanor changed a bit. A smirk-like grimace came over his face as he reclined back from the table. His body language said, "*I'm done talking.*" It was my cue to leave. Before we parted ways, he thanked me for visiting and told me to say hello to Peter and apologized for not meeting him. "*We didn't know the rules.*" I said and John grinned and nodded, "*The rules!.*" He bellowed and while shaking my hand he gave my palm a little middle finger feeler, just John being John.

Amiee and I were starting to slip away as an item. Nothing more than getting tired of routines and an unsure feeling wanting to be a partnered couple. We liked each other a lot, even Amiee's mother who lived upstairs liked and trusted me. I still wanted to rock while Amiee wanted a rocking chair. Noise Control were not active

and the tug to settle down was apparent. I was tempted to join her, but the urge to carry on and create was too great for the suburban serenity of Paterson. Our breakup was a soft landing, we just stopped hanging out. Triggervision was done for a while, and nobody was hanging out or going out to shows in New York anymore. Peter and I continued to meet in New York or Pittsburgh. When Final Solution got underway Peter, to his credit, finally persuaded Manny to set up a Final Solution show at his space the Turmoil Room with Macronympha in 1990. Manny was reluctant to book either the Psychic Workshop, Helltown Inc., or Amiee's project Noise Control. It took close to three years for me to return to Pittsburgh with Final Solution and finally land a show after meeting Manny Theiner.

I still have fond memories of Pittsburgh; it is a lovely city-as-campus with several colleges within a five-mile radius. There is enough local art and culture to attract major artists and bands to its scenic and historically rich environs of bridges and hoagies. It is one of the cities I feel a trace of my spirit in. I don't believe in remote viewing, I'm not ruling it out, but I sometimes get a "real time" street view of cities and neighborhoods where I had a great emotional connection to happiness or otherwise. That's why it's always a shock and a bit forlorn when I return and the spaces and familiar locations are redeveloped and no longer hold my mental video clip intact. It is all I have left of the phantom trace's experiences encoded in memories.

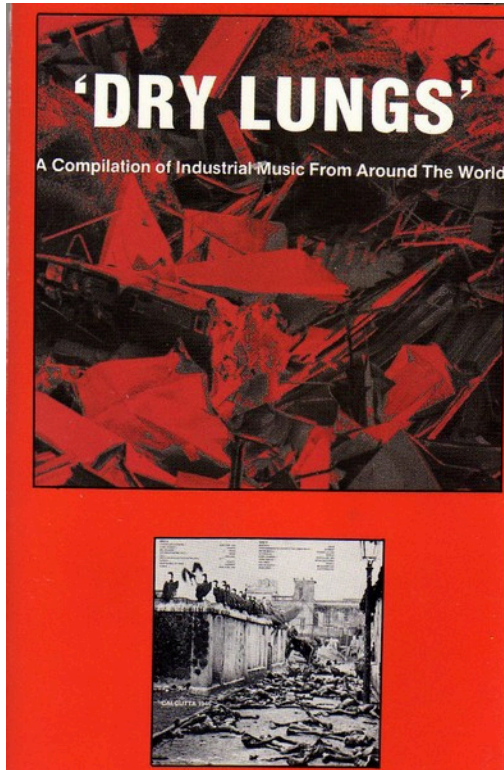
COLD CALLING PAUL

"You can do anything, but I can't stand being ignored!"

– "Getting the Brush" (song by LA punk band FEAR)

One month in 1987, Placebo records sent Wendy Guillotine many of the label's records. The label was expanding and diversifying their catalog and started to release experimental artists like Controlled Bleeding and Maybe Mental as well as their top artists Jodie Foster's Army (JFA), Mighty Sphincter and Sun City Girls. I was still

contributing reviews to the zine and was happy to take these records off Wendy's hands so she could focus on editing interviews, and covering the local NYHC scene.



One of the records from the last batch was *Dry Lungs (A Compilation Of Industrial Music From Around The World)*. On the plastic wrap of Dry Lungs was the home address of Paul Lemos from the Massapequa Long Island based Industrial Noise project Controlled Bleeding who compiled the artists and tracks for Placebo. The *Body Samples* and *Knees And Bones* albums by Controlled Bleeding were already massive influences on me and the members of Triggervision.

I wrote a few letters to Paul, hoping to connect with him for a possible live performance in the upcoming year, but I never received a reply. So, I decided to cold call Paul and enquire about a

possible follow-up to the first Dry Lungs in the future. Back then, anyone could call 411 information and give the operator and name and city and connect you directly. He was not exactly welcoming or forthcoming. I told him I liked his project and wanted to discuss having either Helltown Inc. on the next Dry Lungs installment or a show together. He said Controlled Bleeding doesn't play out very often and have no immediate plans to, which I felt was a conversation ender. I shifted the topic to the interview he conducted with Peter Sotos, (editor of the notorious publication PURE, based in Chicago) and recently included in the book *Apocalypse Culture*, published by Adam Parfrey's Feral House that same year. At that point, he said he had to go and brushed me off the telephone with a quick "Bye."

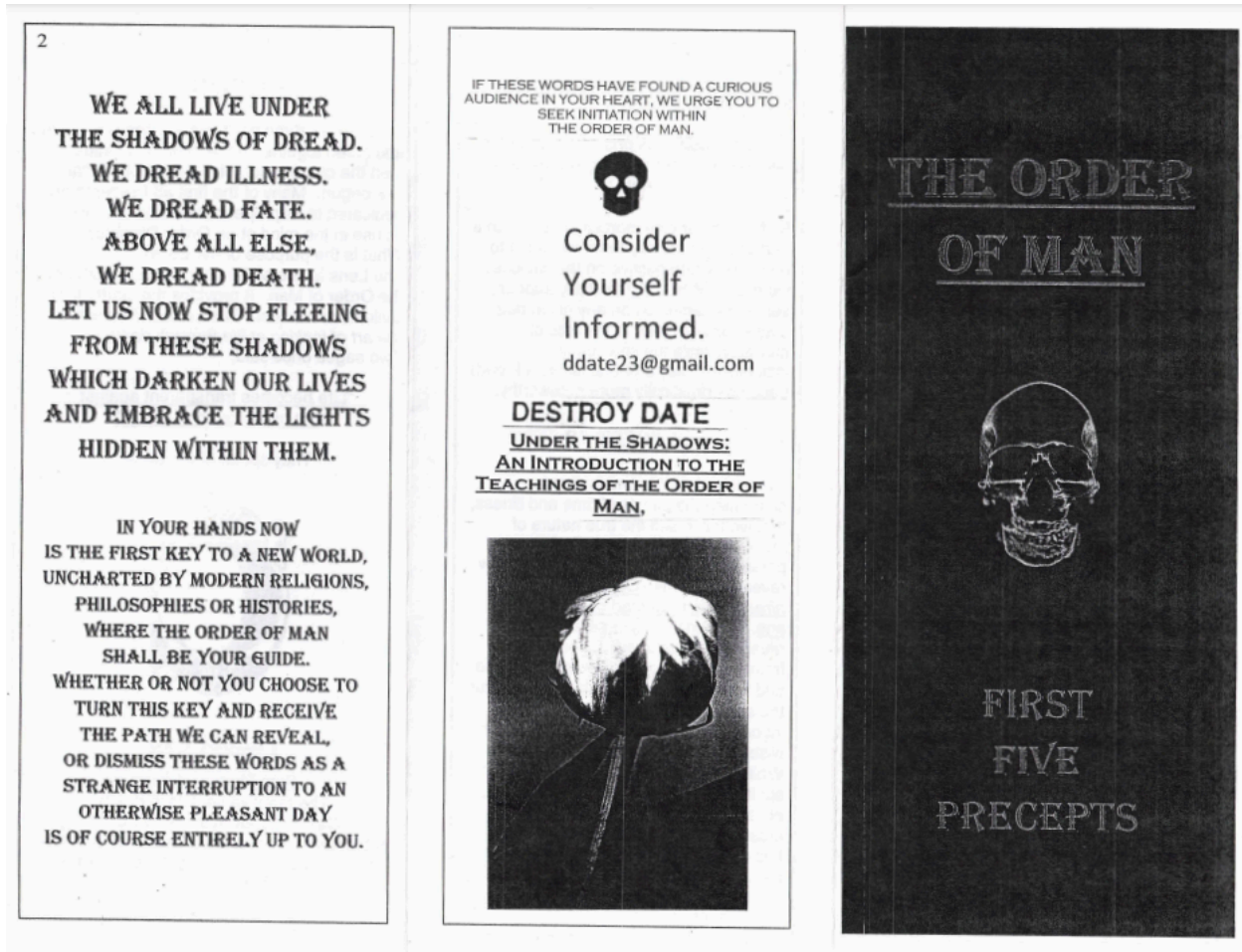
THE ORDER OF MAN

"HUBRIS THROUGH INSOULANCE"



At this point, I was really getting sick of the runaround and general passive blasé attitude of the Lower East Side/SoHo art and music scene. Its smug, self-aggrandizing, elitist attitude turned me off. I felt a dead-end pointlessness reminiscent of many of the pick-up jobs I held to make ends meet. I started to feel a serious revulsion whenever I opened the Village Voice, or flipped through issues of Rolling Stone, or Spin magazines and saw what was passing for hot artists. So-called independent magazines such as Forced Exposure were no better. When I finally met Byron Coley, publisher, and editor of Forced Exposure through Gerad Colsey of Homestead Records and again in the company of Thurston Moore, I didn't bother to pitch Helltown Inc., or chat up anything I was working on. I felt this nagging feeling that many of these people were in a particular circle of insiders, shakers and movers in a real sense of business/industry and I was a mere common laborer plowing away at my craft.

I was fascinated by true underground art and outsiders, two of my favorites were Ugly George and Jack Chick. Ugly George wore a silver lamé jumpsuit and walked around midtown Manhattan trying to videotape women for his public access television show and Jack Chick authored dozens of graphic religious tracts, usually with a campy tale of redemption for sins by accepting Jesus before one shuffles off this mortal coil. There are thousands of Jack Chick tracts printed and have circulated by anonymously being left in hundreds of locations throughout America. The online journal *99% Invisible* claims over one billion have been *sold*. It was a thrill to know that Jack Chick lived and published his tracts in East Los Angeles when I relocated to LA in the 90's.



The Order of Man Pamphlet, Front (Original circa 1985, modified early 2010s)

I authored a fold-over pamphlet in the style of religious tracts asking the reader to follow the orders that will liberate them from the fear of death. The tract had this authoritarian manifesto tone that I slightly styled after a statement from the Australian band SPK called "*The Post-Industrial Strategy*" printed in the "*Industrial Culture Handbook*" published by Re-Search Magazine. I handed out dozens if not hundreds of them out anytime I went into the public, this included subways and city parks. My tract had The Mind over Matter PO Box contact address and I waited for any reaction. I received a few interesting notes from a few curious types, but not the wave of opinion I expected. Over the years, I've updated and slightly revised some of the dogmatic fervor. I occasionally send one out with personal mail to this day. The whole idea behind "The Order of Man" was a tongue-in-cheek prank aimed at the power and stupidity of mass conformity.

My interactions with the general public were always slightly passive aggressive affronts to one I considered a sheep-like herd mentality of stupidity and acceptance of the mass marketing of everything from fast food to religion. It was in the spirit of the Situationists International, The Church of the Sub Genius, The Cacophony Society, and Suicide Club who were active in the mid-late 70's in San Francisco to infiltrate common social settings and environments to disrupt the glazed over zombies of idiot shoppers by subtly shattering their illusion of safety. It was another form of prank that was cheap and effective. I was on fire and seething with contempt with all forms of religious and big business, while telemarketing and infomercials perfoliate unfettered by the federal government and very little oversight by the broadcasting companies.

I was in a personal war against all forms of power and authority. I was neither a criminal nor a revolutionary. I didn't see any point in taking up a cause or protesting with so-called 'social justice warriors.' I leaned towards extermination of everyone, a great culling brought on by war, disease and violent madness. "The Order of Man" was a poignant gag aimed at people's fear and sensibilities.

I loved negative reactions from strangers while my patience and tolerance for bullshit was wearing thin. There wasn't any neutrality between the nouveau riche gaggling like banshees to the piss stained, disheveled homeless that stank up public space; when it came to my disgust it was multilateral, I choose no "sides" and had zero allegiance with any race, class or style, even the so-called No Wave scene were full of self-obsessed assholes, and hardcore shows now felt like being in county jail with a bunch of angry goons. I decided to live under the decree of "The Order of Man" as a private joke. My motto became: "HUBRIS THROUGH INSOUCIANCE" as a frame for an overwhelming pride and disdain while being somewhat indifferent and carefree to the increasing strife in the world.

MEETING CHRIS AND COSEY, AND BRIAN LUSTMORD

"You and I are all I ask / Days that come and days that pass. Playing parts in a game / Around the world and back again."

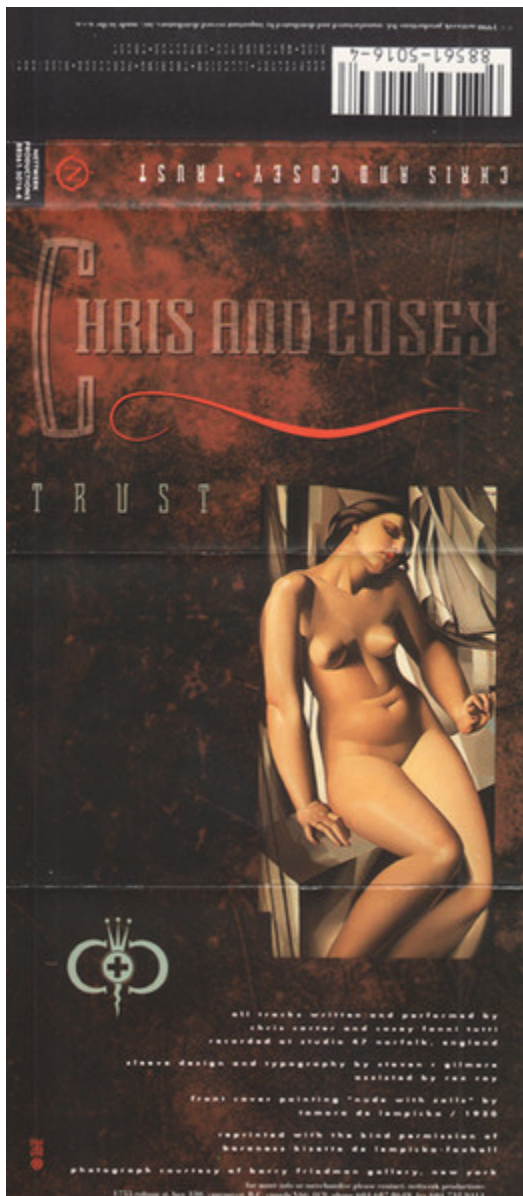
– ‘Misunderstandings’ by Chris and Cosey (from *Techno Primitiv*, circa 1985)

On New Year’s Eve of 1989, Chris and Cosey’s “*Trust*” album was released on Network Records and in 1990 they toured the U.S. with a show in Manhattan at the Pyramid Club on Avenue A. I decided to greet them at the club as a helpful tour guide. I tagged along with Cosey, Chris, Brian “Lustmord” Williams who was in a roadie-security position, and his girlfriend. After dining at a local vegetarian spot in the Village, we wound up back at the Iroquois Hotel on West 44th street. The hotel has been a favorite for traveling musicians for years, acts like Bauhaus and The

Birthday Party were guests at the Iroquois on their first U.S. tours.

I chatted with Brian Lustmord for a good hour in his room, he was a soft-spoken gentleman with a great sense of self dignity and somewhat humble as I rattled on about the first Lustmord album, SPK, John Murphy. He grinned and listened to my fan geek appreciation. But I also warned him to watch the streets and accompany Chris and Cosey if they happen to venture out in the Times Square district, “*This area is a bit dodgy, it’s not as safe as the Village.*” Brian nodded as if noted and then asked for some rest time, I took that as my cue to exit the hotel suite.

After a few hours, I returned to the Pyramid Club, there was some drama while sound checking, Chris Carter noticed the video projector and a few of the interface components were not adequate for synching up with the audio, also the club didn’t provide a video monitor and the projections appeared blurry and washed out on the screen behind



the gear. I asked Chris what he needed, then asked the manager at the Pyramid club if I could use the telephone. I caught Hank in his office at PS-1 and explained "*Chris and Cosey, you know from Throbbing Gristle, are down here and need a few items for the concert.*" I think I may have even put Chris on the phone, "Thank you!" "What's happening," I asked. "He's coming down, Hank." An hour later I was helping Hank with video monitors, an interface device and cables. I connected him with Chris with the help of Hank Stalher from PS-1, I was able to secure some video equipment needed for the visuals.

Chris and Cosey's performance went on without a glitch and the crowd loved it! Cosey thanked me with a hug and some cool merchandise from the tour. Hank and I broke down the gear and drove it back to PS-1. I think the best part of the whole experience was the ability to problem solve a situation by asking one of my co-workers and boss to enable some of my heroes. Hank trusted me and was there in a clutch. I felt I earned a certain amount of trust from others to shine when it was imperative. It wasn't about impressing Chris or Cosey or being the cool insider with the hook up that evening. It was about the bonds I established and helping others out when possible. Hank Stalher made that happen, it's no coincidence that the C&C album and tour was called "*Trust*," and how all the magical events and circumstances fell thankfully into place that day and night.

GENERATOR SOUND ART GALLERY

"I am involved in events which unite people together to focus on the experience of listening."

– Gen Ken Montgomery

In the late 70's into the 80's, there was no true home base for independent musicians in the DIY home taper genre, they were scattered throughout America, often relying on friends and acquaintances to provide lodging if visiting to perform while touring to save some of the cost of being on the road. Many of these "bedroom producers"

and labels had makeshift studios cobbled together from mostly previously owned outboard gear and instruments to record new music or dub tapes for release to the public. These DIY tape labels that would humbly advertise in fanzines usually with a post office box for an address where the curious may order a photocopied catalog with a listing of projects, releases, and updates on future tapes in the works. I collected dozens of these catalogs, and had contacts to not only tape labels, but rare esoteric books, religious and political tracts and pamphlets really fringe organizations from the "Flat Earth Society" to the Golden Dawn or OTO meeting schedules, to gender and sexuality encounter groups. The Sub-underground was alive and thriving behind those small bronze, key locked numbered boxes that line the corridors of USPS office buildings. A lot of this happened well before home computers and the internet were ubiquitous. *

I had many favorite artists from that time period including Minoy (and his side project with PBK called Disco Splendor) PBK, Zona Industriale, 1348, Croiners, John Hudak, Phillip Perkins, Black Iron Prison, Unit 731, Coup De Grace, Locomotiv S.S., Human Head Transplant, Maybe Mental, Pacific 231, Dog as Master, Algebra Suicide, The Horse Falls, The Haters and many, many more.⁵ But there were no proper shops or galleries to promote or curate live appearances. Thus, many artists were mis-booked with other acts that weren't necessarily of the same musical background. Though I approved of diversity in live bills, it wasn't often a good fit.

Enter the Generator Experimental Music Gallery located at 200 East Third Street. Its proprietor was a friendly and sharp-witted man by the name of "GEN-KEN" Montgomery. Ken was always warm and welcoming, a far cry from any of the other galleries and venues I used to visit, he was always interested in the visitors, what they did and their ideas and opinions and if they made sounds, the word music was an afterthought but not a condemnation, all were welcome the more experimental and creative, the better.

⁵ There is a great book about the home tapers era of the 1980's by Robin James titled "Cassette Mythos" published in 1992 by Autonomedia.

As a sound artist himself he had unique approaches and techniques for creating sonic compositions. There was a fully functional lamination machine on the front counter, and a record bin in the front of the space with a wall of visual and uniquely packaged tapes and records. That lamination machine as well as an ice making/breaking machine would be centerpieces and sound source for many of GenKen's own audio creations. One of my personal favorite releases of GEN-KEN is "*Drilling Holes in the Wall*," which is a collection of various recordings both live and studio from 1986 to 1991, three of the tracks were recorded in Conrad Schnitzler's Berlin studio. But his audio innovations are unlimited, and every release was extraordinarily different from the last, there was no pigeonholing Gen-Ken. I watched, I listened, I learned a lot.



Conrad Schnitzler and Edward Giles at Generator NYC (Photo: Gen Ken)

Throughout the years I stepped into Generator I was able to see live performances and installations by Scott Konzelmann of Chop Shop and his "speaker constructions," Ron Lessard from RRRecords - Due Process tape mix concert, and

Michael Zodorozny of Crash Course in Science. As I frequented the gallery, I started to build a good rapport with Ken and was fortunate to meet artists in the sound art community including Carl Howard of Audiofile Tapes, Dave Prescott, David Lee Myers of Arcane Device, Adam Bohman of Morphogenesis and Al Margolis of Sound of Pig Music. But the one artist that truly inspired me was Conrad Schnitzler. If there is anyone who can be considered an artist down the genome it was "Con." I will never forget our meeting and how we exchanged ideas. Here I was holding court with one of the founding members of Tangerine Dream and Cluster, who made me feel special by simply listening to me. He really got a kick out of my idea to synchronize a 24-hour Conrad performance across all 24 time zones around the globe!



Cassette masters of EJ Vodka performances at Generator

I was fortunate enough to perform twice at Generator Gallery. October 7, 1989, with a lecture-demonstration titled "*It Is Written*", and another EJ Vodka performance on February 17, 1990. Two weeks earlier on February 3, I also assisted Generator with an interactive listening party for the ultra-rare Haim Collective record, which came packaged with instructions for organizing a listening concert. The performances

were the style of a salon style reception to give a lecture and demonstration on how to create sound works with very common and readily available items and gear such as a hand-held tape recorder and used tapes one may find at a thrift store or yard sale. I was still very interested in pranks and culture jamming and shared examples of how to insert art back into public space (*see photographs at end of chapter*).

So, I decided to juxtapose the model of presenting a novelty of a casual encounter with the focus on being a persuasive huckster that one would now see on one of those TEDx lecturers that shuck and jive pseudo-intellectual knowledge about some ambiguous subject. But instead of trying to bamboozle the visitors at the Generator gallery with some lacking conjectural nonsense too dense in context and ersatz art props, I simply shared some approaches to my art and the process of private to public dissemination.

Eventually Generator moved to another and much larger loft space on the third floor at 547 West 20th street. There I got to see the Haters and several other acts. Gen Ken and Generator were some of the most positive and fun times while coming up as an artist and influence and inspire me to this day.

*GENERATOR SOUND ART GALLERY: WITNESS TESTIMONY FROM GEN
KEN MONTGOMERY (GENERATOR)*

When E.J. Vodka and friends entered Generator it was like a fierce, energy filled wave descended from some unknown and distant source. They swept in a mix of excitement, anticipation and enthusiasm for listening. Extreme sounds, extreme listening. We all basked in the experience of sound together. There was a lot of fast-paced conversation and curiosity about what was coming through the speakers and what was happening in the collapsible ambient immersive sounds happening in the basement.



Ear drums were vibrating. The space between hanging out and performing was blurry. Cassette tape, vinyl and props were used to explode the internal angst of the moment and make a sonic statement about the life we were living in New York's East Village in 1990. Props from the street, maybe ripped off the wall of the MTA, or found in the street became part of the sonic presentation of E. J. Vodka and friends.





E.J. was a man with a mission, he had something to share and scream about. It's been so long now I couldn't tell you any details, but the energy and enthusiasm was visceral. It was real. And it was fun. And it was loud.



EJ THE DJ

"I am a DJ; I am what I play."

– David Bowie

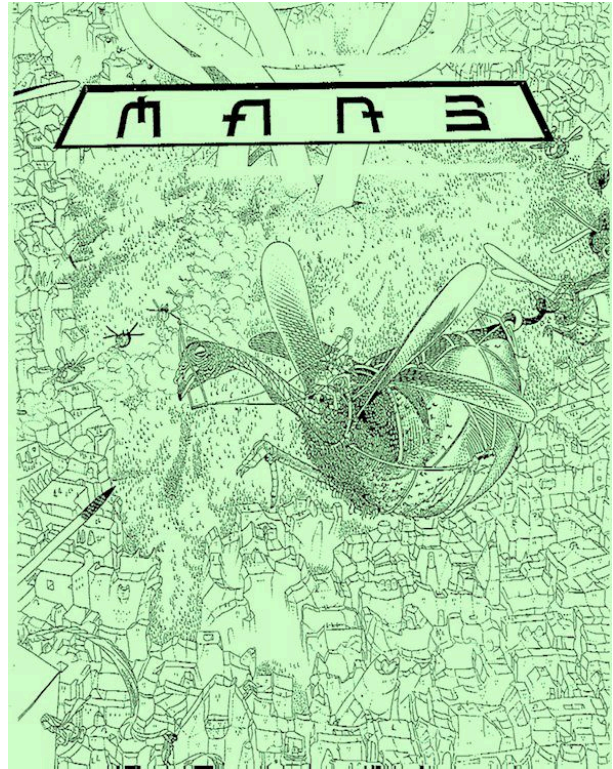
During all the turmoil with Triggervision and trying to get more ground support for Helltown Inc., I was able to land a DJ gig through my friend Matt Green, who introduced me to Jon Sidel who was DJ'ing at Mars, a huge four-story building in the lower west side "meat district." Mars was converted into a popular club and owned by club Czar Rudolph and run by Yuki who was famous in Tokyo for his club entrepreneurship and wild parties that often-made international press. Matt, John, and I DJ'ed the same nights with such luminary DJ's as Red Alert, Mark Kamins, Michael Tron, and legendary club Michel Alig who became infamous after killing a friend in a drug/sex delirium. It later became a book and trashy film.

The third floor was a lounge for relaxing and chilling out. Matt played a variety of classic singles from the late 70's punk era, along with Jolly who played the rarest of rare dub plates. Jon was from Los Angeles and played some of that city's more progressive acts such as Jane's Addiction, Masters of Reality, N.W.A. and The Red Hot Chili Peppers, all of whom were rising out of the LA underground and about to break big. Actors Matt Dillon, Ally Sheedy, and writer Tama Janowitz as well as the members of Dee-Lite and an occasional Beastie Boy could be seen strolling through as regulars.

At that time, my favorite DJ's and producers were Mark Kamins, Ivan Ivan, Frankie Bones and Lenny Dee. I also liked Bill Laswell's web of influence and prolific output of music from avant hard abstract projects, Material and Massacre with Fred Frith, to the work he did with Herbie Hancock and Peter Gabriel. All of this was swirling around me and I was tempted to jump on board the 4/4 machine drum driven revolution that was exploding in New York. The multiple varieties of club music were branching and expanding at an exponential rate, and several well-known and early Industrial / Experimental artists such as Cabaret Voltaire, Hula, and Severed

Heads were already dedicating most of their tracks and live sets to dance driven music with some abstract sound work fused into the new music, the sets of pure collage and ugly sonics were behind them. If I was going to make the leap, I either had to invest in new state-of-the-art equipment and have a real and proper home studio or find studios with reasonable rates and know exactly what to do from the first minute. Both were very cost restrictive.

It was amazing to have that power and clout to walk past the crowd waiting to get in by being handpicked by the fussy door staff. One thing led to another, and I was guest DJ'ing art openings at The New Museum and other independent galleries. I spent weeks rehearsing one set for an upcoming art show at a new, hot gallery in Tribeca that redressed the baroque period in a postmodern lens that was composed of various elements of classical music. It was a true learning curve to consider notes and pitch while mixing two pieces of delicate and rigid compositions from the canon of baroque music.



It was around this time I met writer and cultural critic Neil Strauss who was interested in starting a DJ project called the "Turntable Army" which would also include Christian Marclay and David Shea. Neil and I would meet and discuss ideas a few times, but due to logistics and personal schedules, it never coagulated. Through Patrice Mack, I was able to DJ at the last Carnivore show at Lamour's in Brooklyn, Peter Steele wanted "real Industrial music," so I played a set of the harshest noise and Power Electronics I had on record mixed on top of metal such as Bathory, Venom and Celtic Frost, the crowd hated it, Peter Steele loved it, mission accomplished!

There was an unlimited number of after hour parties fueled by deep house DJ's and drugs throughout the city. Using my clout, I was able to walk into exclusive spots and

spend hours in dark rooms full of volume, MDMA and cocaine. The amount of debauchery and vice I could describe can fill another chapter but is best left unwritten. One evening I showed up at Mars with my record crates and tape deck at 9pm, and there was someone behind the turntable decks setting up for the night. He wore a huge striped Dr Suess Cat in the Hat headpiece, enormous baggy jeans and rare Puma sneakers. There were several hip-hop club kid's milling around giving me the stink eye. I asked what was up and he told me I could start after 4am. I was taken aback and asked what was up, I wasn't told anything about a new schedule. He sheepishly said, "*I don't know.*" And started to play break-beats while his friends popped and locked in the middle of the room. I stayed until 4 to get paid and still didn't get any information. The next night, the hip-hop club kids were painting over the industrial grade meat cutters and grinders with rainbow water colored paint. At this point I knew my DJ'ing days at Mars were numbered.

I stayed in touch with Jon Sidel after the Mars break off and wound-up doing samples and keyboards with his band Fudge Factory Inc. for a short time with the stage name "Dr. Bad Vibes". Our biggest show together was with Thelonus Monster at the Pyramid club. Jon and Monster's vocalist and principal songwriter Bob Forrest were old friends from Hollywood. When Fudge Factory were recording their record in New York for the mysterious Mongrel Music record label, Keith Morris from the Circle Jerks was usually at the studio during the recording sessions. He had mixed feelings about my contributions to the songs, so I kept my mouth shut since I didn't know his connection to the band other than being tight with Jon. Besides, it's Keith who is LA Punk Rock royalty as far back as when Black Flag were living in Hermosa Beach, and originally named Panic in 1978, when the record and follow up seven-inch record finally came out. My sampler parts were mixed out and nowhere to be heard. This used to upset me for years, but after seeing the Fudge Factory Inc. nowhere but in the dollar bins of Amoeba records maybe it was the best for all involved, goodnight and good luck!

One of the things I experimented with was sampling one of Jon's guitar chords and riffs, then playing the chord over the song on my keyboard. Jon and the other guitarist liked the sampled "third guitar" effect, whenever they played a riff, that

extra sampled guitar added that full crunch element, I could even play the chord at a lower octave for more depth and sustain. We rehearsed at the drummer's space in Brooklyn and nailed the Pyramid show. Jon planned to move the band to Hollywood where he lived full time. I was tempted to relocate, but I didn't have the funds and wanted to be close to my family, so I bailed out of the band.

I kept the Fudge Factory Inc. samples and used them for the second Helltown Inc. tape *Overtime in the Lower Decks*, which I completed with my friend Josh late in 1987 / 1988. Josh engineered the "rock" tracks that he sequenced with a Roland TR-707 drum machine and simple MIDI patching. Josh would lay down tracks and I would add synth, tapes and the Fudge Factory samples over. The more experimental, instrumental tracks were more or less interludes sandwiched between the structured songs. My gear was divided between Josh's place and Big Stick's home studio in Astoria. I would grab what devices I needed from either studio and work on the music.

PARADIGMS OF PURGATORY

"Communication across the revolutionary divide is inevitably partial."

– Thomas Kuhn

For a while, I floundered around trying to integrate my sound tapes and synthesizer with forming bands by answering classified ads in the back of the Village Voice free newspaper and tearing tabs off flyers in the East Village. Nothing clicked, so I continued to record and work on new Helltown Inc. material. In 1987 Fisher-Price released the PXL-2000 toy camcorder. The camera ran on batteries and recorded grainy black and white videos on audio cassette tape. I purchased two. I thought this was a real game changer in the world of lo-fi aesthetics and I became obsessed with filming anything interesting, even the mundane landscapes of bridges and factories had a new appeal in distorted chiaroscuro greyscale.

I was interested in *new media* technology that was being explored in the early 1980's. But budget and limitations of capability were holding back many DIY artists from gaining high-end technology that universities and art institutions had on site in studios that by default also became laboratories innovating new hardware, software, and synthesis. The utilization of low-end consumer electronics with cutting edge professional gear always intrigued me, and I tried to look for anyone in the NY/NJ area that could help in a collaborative setting.



PXL-2000 Camera, Advertisement Photo

I found a small ad in the Village Voice for a video studio and started to learn how to integrate two different video images with Sony RM-450 attached to two VHS video tape machines with a joystick interface, and through trial and error I spent hours of time playing with video imagery, I became obsessed with blending and merging disparate and often jolting scenes of nature, found footage and news items. Through PS-1, I was able to land a few videos and DJ gigs including a closing party at the sister gallery Clocktower, and an opening at The New Museum in Soho on Broadway. I hauled around a Sony Trinitron I found discarded and started finding places to set up a VHS machine and screen. I did this for several months until the television started to fail and I eventually halted renting time at the video studio. I was too busy with

work, and needed money for rent, the disposable income was now needed as time and money became priorities. I also started a pretty routine habit of drinking and cocaine which vacuumed funds out of me like a liposuction catheter. I gave all of the tape masters to the Mars video tech so they could be viewed by clubgoers. Unfortunately, I didn't make copies. I remember a fueling of depression and a stifling of life from work and not finding satisfaction in anything. My dating was a haphazard series of women I met through friends at museum openings or at Mars when I DJ'ed. They were either detached, aloof and noncommittal or eager and too raw emotionally to be dating so soon after a long relationship and almost never returned for a second or third date.

I felt that by not having the time or money to continue making videos was gnawing away at me. I would often run into some of the hot independent filmmakers like Nick Zedd, Richard Kern, Joe Christ, and Tommy Turner around the East Village and go see screenings whenever they happened. Tommy Turner was the nicest of the bunch, he would invite me over to drink and check out some new footage he was working on. I told him about the PXL-2000 camcorder and how the black and white resolution looked eerie and gray. "*Everything I shoot looks gritty like a surveillance camera.*" Tommy said he would love to see it, but as always schedules and sidetracks dominated my days. My gameplan for life was not stable, fun but nothing to hang a future on. I started to visit my mother and brother more often as I felt I was neglecting spending time with them. That nagging feeling that I sacrificed too much time chasing the night life promise of a big payoff and not flown right and *get with the program* badgered me and guilt was always lagging my every move like an old flame that you run into somewhere in the city and rush away from while they're still calling out your name.

IN THE REALM OF THE ART AND NOISE WEASELS

"I know my parents, stand behind me come what may. I know that I'm ready when I finally hear them say; it's a different world from where you come from."

– Aretha Franklin

"Ah, I don't have time for the gallery people."

– Emerson Balla (Friend, and filmmaker that eventually quit "art" to pursue a successful venture as a stock trader, circa 2015)

DISCLAIMER- This chapter can be categorized as a diatribe or rant. And a superfluous addition to the Helltown Inc. story.

The big question in my life wasn't, *"Is there a God?"* or *"Will I fall in love forever?"* or even, *"Is there an afterlife, and should I straighten out my karma?"* Oh no, the big, big question was *"Why are these motherfuckers getting all these shows and press and I'm being passed over like a five-day old fish?"* Perhaps I was naïve and somewhat delusional to think that the music and art I was pursuing was going to be a popular hit among the greater population. But, even on the DIY lower level. Helltown Inc. was airless, outside of Ken Montgomery and Generator gallery, the project was dead in the water. There also seemed to be a real shunning between the "bridge and tunnel crew" from the outer boroughs and the LES/SoHo art mafia.

I don't know how many of the readers have wondered why do some bands, artists, individuals gain such momentum and rise to meteoric fame? Are they really all that talented, smarter, better looking even? Do they have communicative or interpersonal skills that perhaps you and I lack? The trajectory of fame has stages, there's buzz, then hype and it blows up and peaks, sometimes for a month or two, sometimes for several years. In that period the artist is offered opportunities that many others in the same field or background that veterans who were involved in the arts will never be offered. Artists in that newly discovered position now have the chance to cultivate a "core" audience that will follow, monitor, and collect those

artist's work. They become the "it" phenom and are placed in a cultural arena that reproduces the same trope or model of success ad nauseum.

It was my grandfather Al, who first explained some basic facts of life to me. It was reiterated in stereo by both my aunt and mother that the "arts" as a profession or vocation is for the "well to do." Both aunt and mother had no respect for Punk or Industrial music. As far as they were concerned, it was a nuisance the way illegal trash dumping or bad graffiti taggers leave their acrylic mark on private property was tolerated. On many occasions they saw most of these genres as phony created and marketed by phonies to the gullible, uneducated or to others rich and lazy enough to, *"sit around and stroke each other's egos"* as mom put it. It wasn't that my family were "art snobs" or felt some art sacred or profound and others amateur, far from it. They were in fact "anti-snob" and knew that most of the art and entertainment world was made up of nepotism, the wealthy, and well connected.

All my relatives had "aesthetic hobbies", nothing more, nothing less. My aunt painted and my mother used to take photographs of flowers in the back garden area (until I lost her camera trying to be Mr. Photo Shoot guy. I still feel guilty about that.) They never thought for a second that these endeavors were for anyone but their own family's enjoyment. When I shared some of the music and fanzine art, not only did they think it was cheap shock value and dumb but was a gimmick to siphon money out of poorer artists and rip them off, "Because that's what they do, there's nothing original going on here!"

In three decades of hindsight, I realized my family was so right. It's with deep regret and some guilty resentment that my involvement with the arts and music was a selfish pursuit for fame, notoriety, and respect, some of the very worst reasons for creativity. Some, with a more Capitalist value system would disagree and claim that everything is a commodity therefore, everything is for sale. Artists and actors are merely merchants selling their crafts in the lucrative markets of auctions and private acquisitions.

There is what I call "The Realm". This is the exclusive club of insiders and influencers that always take control of scenes and contort them to promote their own

friends and agenda while omitting others. It is a subtle form of blacklisting and censoring, and it mirrors the same form of control and bureaucracy found in many other sectors of politics and hierarchical networks and social structures. My experience in the four plus decades of music art, and performance is that there are gatekeepers and shot callers throughout the sub-underground scenes. At the time of this writing in December of 2023. I am still being ghosted, snubbed, and generally treated as *persona non grata* by many in the Industrial/Experimental Harsh Noise community. I have reached out several times to fanzines, podcasts, festival curators and venues trying to promote, and be a part of them with very little success.

Perhaps going to a prestigious art school, or having an MBA as a way to navigate the underground like any other financial venture model. There was no way to beta test the market, have data points or apply professional marketing strategies to this art movement, most of it was trial and error divided by supply and demand. What do people want and how to satisfy that demand without losing one's heart for art?

There's a "Potemkin Village" aspect to the community of modern Industrial/Harsh Noise scene that ironically mimics the macro society that makes up the very world it tries to distance itself from through transgressive art and music. From the very start, I suspected that Industrial/Experimental culture was an elitist "rich kids" art phase that attracted eccentrics and those with disposable incomes. But it also attracts true outliers and individuals that push back against zones and pockets of cities and towns that are devoid of "high culture" and extremely antagonistic against those who are marginalized, bullied, or basically rejected by the rigorous norms of American socialization. It was the same model over and over again. The Realm has a very small group of movers and shakers that basically control the leverage any artist may have in any scene. It only takes a few years for a turnover of new people to come in and challenge the status quo. The phenomenon happens on every level and class in a macro society and the hipster subculture is not immune to the same model, it almost seems to naturally occur.

If it sounds like I'm bellyaching and totally discontent, I am. But I feel absolutely justified in bringing to light a serious problem of the sub-underground

scene and how it has fractured into dozens of factions, some of whom prefer to isolate others while only promoting themselves and a tight elite circle of friends. I call bullshit on that tactic and a big fuck off to all of the little ass wipes that dictate who gets to play, get exposed or chosen to be released on labels. The inability to progressively move Helltown Inc. to a steady succession of live shows and relevant new recordings became a daunting task. I became depressed, disillusioned, and rather frustrated with the miasma of clicks and backroom players setting up "private shows" in undisclosed locations.

How can I support a scene that I have very little access to? The "New York Minute" is a reality for so many people rushing around as if they've literally run out of time years ago and are now running on vapors. The weeks accelerated as the days became as thin as poker chips and lost just as quickly as a desperate gambler on a losing night. Sometimes when I browse records or bookstores, I feel like I'm visiting a mausoleum, every album or book is a headstone. I think about how much time and effort went into all this music and writing, now just sitting here in cut out bins and dead stock remainder. A grin comes over me when I see a friend's record, or one that my mom owned long ago.

The Noise/Experimental scene attracts many fantastic, creative people, each bringing a style and technique that is fresh, original, and relative, and I love our interactions, always excited about new releases and performances. However, it also attracts a lot of punk-ass wheeler dealers that use the community to their own hype and benefit. These are the "Noise Weasels" snooty users that play favoritism over equity and fairness. If you are involved in this genre as an artist/performer I'm sure you will run across them in time. I am reminded by what my friend GX Jupiter-Larsen said as a reminder: *"Sometimes you have to separate the art from the artist."* No words have ever rung as true when it comes to dealing with the Noise Weasels, but they could go eat a dick regardless! OUCH!!

FINDING A SOLUTION

"You've got the right to hate who you want."

– Final Solution, "Right To Hate"

Helltown Incorporated was still in operation, despite all the other situations involving Triggervision and parting ways with Missing Foundation. My friend Josh and I assembled two more Helltown Inc. tapes from my archives: "*Overtime in the Lower Decks*," and "*Music from the Cathode Ray Mission*" which was the collection of tape loops and ambient recordings used in the PS-1 installation room I managed for several years. The masters were left with Josh, but I never got around to mixing the four track masters to stereo. As time went on, I became restless and wanted to do something much more confrontational in both music and image. Home taping was fine, but it was too safe, and I didn't want to be just another project pumping out tape after tape.

Something in me had changed, I was getting sick of the lightweight music and art permeating the sub-underground scene. My previous attempts at Helltown Inc. were fine. But I felt it was time to strip down to bare essentials and move away from the process of recording and trying to hunt down shows. Bands like The Grey Wolves and Ramlah and record labels Broken Flag were offering up Power Electronics that were cold precise sonic assaults with little or no regard for the morality or safety of art institutions, collectors, or critics. Power Electronics had the same negative profundity anger and rage as punk, while I was getting ignored by venues like the Kitchen and Knitting Factory. I was also getting sick of the city, between the crime and violence, Manhattan became an open market for groups either protesting or proselytizing for as many half-ass causes as there are days in a lifetime. There were dozens of fringe political and religious organizations setting up folding tables, ranting some diatribe and usually blaming other ethnic or national groups for their so-called oppression. I didn't mind the street theater as free entertainment, but it

became a nuisance and in the end none of these groups or cause were going to change the lousy state of the city or country for that matter.

Around 1987, I started to see this guy at the same shops I frequented in the East Village. At first, I didn't pay him any mind. He was clean cut and didn't have the washed out look from over partying. He usually wore a cut off jean vest over his leather with both a Motorhead and a Throbbing Gristle patch. This was unique. Two great bands from different genres, "Good taste" I thought to myself. One day in St. Marks Sound record store I saw the same individual purchase a Throbbing Gristle "*Discipline*" 12 inch. where the band is standing outside the old Ministry of Information in Berlin. My first thought was "Damn. I wanted that!" Then I reiterated, "It's going to a good home." I was happy this stranger picked it rather than a record collector geek that would flip it for profit.

In 1988, I saw him outside of CBGB's at a Rapeman show. I was chatting with an acquaintance complaining that I liked Steve Albini's first band Big Black way more than Rapeman and didn't want to spend the money on the show, he caught my comment and agreed about Big Black. "*I've seen you around town, St. Marks Sounds, See Hear books. I'm EJ.*" We talked about cults and cult movies, drank beer and exchanged phone numbers. This is how I met Greg Scott.

Greg Scott and I started to rehearse as a duo starting in late 1988 through spring of 1989 as an untitled project when I introduced Chris "Useless" Yustinich on second synthesizer as I moved to vocalist (under Greg's suggestion) and christened the trio Final Solution.⁶ I still operated Helltown Inc. until 1990 and kept the Mind Over Matter post office box open throughout Final Solutions run to 1994. Our shows became notorious for their intensity and sometimes violent outbursts from the audience.

⁶ For an in-depth interview about the origins of Final Solution, please watch the interview Oskar Brummel conducted with Edward Giles/Final Solution on the White Centipede Noise channel on YouTube. And for a detailed account of post-Helltown Incorporated and the history of Final Solution, please reference the book on Greg Scott & Hydra published by Neural Operations, edited by Michael Contreras (MK9) available 2024.

The Final Solution was borne directly out of the resentment and utter frustration of trying to deal with gatekeeping and gameplaying of the New York City underground art and music scene, period. Trying to get recognition and respect from an insular groups of sub scenes in the No Wave and art world was a fool's errand and I was through with being complacent and respectful to the established downtown art and music scene. I started to hate my own sub-culture and Final Solution was the climatic result.



The Final Solution

We eventually contacted Mark Solotroff of AWB Records in Chicago, after hearing our debut four track demonstration tape Mark signed us on and moved to Greenpoint Brooklyn and set up operations for his label and project Intrinsic Action. The backstory of Final Solution has become the stuff of legend. We were fueled by anger, hatred, drugs and alcohol and the whole history of the band lasted only 5 years.

THE HIGHLIGHT REEL FROM HELL

"There is no greater sorrow than thinking back upon a happy time in misery."

– Dante Alighieri, *Inferno*

I was also very fortunate enough to participate in several independent movies and videos. One of the first was a "lost opportunity" when a film crew arrived on 45th Road in Long Island City to shoot a scene for the movie *The Warriors* (1979). All of my neighborhood friends showed up to watch. It was the climatic moment when the Warriors met the lowly Orphans, the entire street meeting took place right in front of my parent's brownstone apartment. We made such a racket during shots that the line producer told us we could be extras if we kept quiet during takes. The production crew aimed a camera and some lights at us and we started climbing fences and roofs in an attempt to show off our "skills." When the movie finally hit the theaters, we realized they lied just to keep us busy!

I also make cameos in *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* (1990) – look for the horse and carriage. German Filmmaker Peter Sempel used footage of Chris Yustinich (Final Solution) and I when we worked for a horse in carriage owner in his 1991 film *Just Visiting This Planet*. A minor role as an interrogating detective in the band Cop Shoot Cop's 1993 MTV video "Room 429" (shot on location in PS-1 Museum) and a brief role in The Haters/Gx Jupitter-Larsen's DVD movie *A Noisy Delivery*.

This reissue of "*This Too Shall Pass*" is humbly dedicated to my family: Pete Sake, Joey and Laura, my mother, and grandparents. And it is also dedicated to the hundreds of writers, poets, musicians, filmmakers, and artists that have either quit, died or faded into obscurity for whatever reason.

The life of an independent artist is often a lonely, thankless endeavor. The responsibilities and pressures of life can be especially hard on artists trying to balance all the activities of normalized adult routines. There are times you may be sitting on the edge of your bed with your head in your hands thinking, "*Why am I even doing*

this?" It is always better to do art than not. Even if it's not appreciated by others, or economically challenging at times. Your efforts are NOT in vain. I am the "EVERY FAN!" I celebrate the obscure, the underdog, the "go home" kids, the unfit for consumption.

If you are a creative and have been doing your craft for some time, or a newbie just getting started, I welcome and dedicate "*This Too Shall Pass*" to you! Don't be discouraged by lack of money, or the gatekeeping, noise weasels you may encounter on your artistic journey. If your music and art isn't causing trouble, controversy or negative reaction from others, you're probably doing it wrong. It should really satisfy you first, but if it also stirs up anathema that's a bonus point in a world of hypocrisy, exploitation and insider cool bullshitters; DON'T BELONG!

As I said in the liner notes of the Final Solution/Trucido split released on Der Bunker, the Industrial/Harsh Noise/Power Electronic/HNW community is the proverbial "last house on a dead-end street." It is the final placement for the truly innovative, bitter and distraught. It is NOT for the candy-ass popular culture vultures. Anyone looking for stardom or celebrity should get the fuck out of the house we've built over the past four decades. And NOBODY has the authority to censor anyone's point of view, no matter how offensive or flat out wrong-headed it appears to be. And at the same turn, ALL ARE WELCOMED! Bully bullshit and tough guy postering have ruined all other scenes, especially the hardcore-punk and Industrial dance genres for that matter. I don't have time for unproductive garbage thinking thugs or snooty ex-art students that prance around in arrogant superiority, because I'm not from either camp.

I have an undying love for the Sub-Underground culture. The art, music and personalities that are attracted and active in all things that shun the horrible and true "Culture of Death" of popularity, fame, and falseness. I've found a home among the bizarre, antisocial, and cultural outsiders. We live in a world of toxic narcissism, entitlement and influencers that peddle pure garbage onto mass consumers trying to mimic an impossible image, and sadly, many who are just trying to fit in. We, down here, come unattached to the dung heap of the group, we come open to new people and experiences that WE CREATE by us, for us. You'll meet friends and partners and

will have a healthy outlet for all mundane, and attitude assholes you encounter in your daily life. It's better than expensive gyms filled with "them" and more fulfilling than wasting time at bars and clubs with ego-maniacs sucking down expensive drinks while trying to impress one another with hollow bragging. Fuck that!

Consider "*This Too Shall Pass*" yours as a gift.

RECORDING INFORMATION

Some of the original sound sources and tapes used go back as far as 1979 and not placed into a track until late 1982, early 1983. As I picked up more instruments and gear the overall sound of Helltown Inc. expanded past field recording and samples of environmental, or media from television and radio. My earliest collection of sound ware was several General Electric and Panasonic tape recorders, a micro cassette recorder and a Casio VL Tone micro synthesizer, which is a tiny push button keyboard which I fed into a series of pedals and rackmounts. The sampler used small hard drives like floppy disks and was not purchased until 1985.

PRODUCTION CREDITS AND GEAR

Most of the tracks here were recorded at home in Long Island City, on-site locations at PS-1 museum, Brooklyn, and New Jersey. I always felt that "*This Too Shall Pass*" was uneven and sounded somewhat lacking or incomplete, and almost passed on Al Margolis's offer to release a tape on Sound of Pig Music as I deemed the tracks inferior in quality and not hanging together as a cohesive whole. By 1988, Brian SET was no longer contributing to Helltown Inc., and Dan had already moved to Philadelphia, so my trips out to Fairlawn, NJ were winding down. Side 2 is basically me, my friend Josh K. who engineered the basic tracks and helped with remote recordings, and John Gill with final equalization and subliminal vocals from Yanna Trance of Big Stick.

Though Brian and I had a growing array of studio gear and hardware, most of the tracks on "*This Too Shall Pass*" are minimal in implementation and layering of sounds to complete the pieces. No Midi, sequencing or computers were used in either the construction, recording or mixing. Almost all of the pieces were assembled on a Fostex or Tascam 4-track recorder, and treated with several rackmount effect processors during post production. Other elements such as microphones of various qualities, cheap guitar amplifiers, a damaged bass guitar, effect pedals and dusty analog synthesizers were also utilized to achieve the finished tracks.

I've included gear, instrumentation and recording process information along with some context to ideas behind each track.

*PRODUCTION CREDITS AND GEAR: WITNESS TESTIMONY FROM
JOHN GILL (BIG STICK / DRAG RACING UNDERGROUND /
CO-PRODUCER OF "THIS TOO SHALL PASS")*

I distinctly recall when E.J. Vodka (Edward Giles) brought his Helltown Inc. "THIS TOO WILL PASS" project to my studio in Astoria NY for recording and mixing in January of 1988. The gears revved up and accelerated into motion, it was apparent to me that this project was the REAL 'Industrial' genre of audio art. With so much fake and phony 'cosmetic' industrial music surfacing at that time as dance-oriented club music. These recordings in fact, are the proverbial 'real McCoy'. This is the pioneering brand of raw, socially transgressive Industrial music and text that goes through all the necessary phases and nuances to stimulate the human psyche. Sometimes there's the sheer brutality of a multi car pile-up. And sometimes, there's the slightly more subtle sensation of winged nymphs using the 'jaws of life' to cut you out of the wreckage, to gently pull you out of the pile up, lifting you from the infernal crash, then healing your mind and body with soothing sorcery atop a blow-up air mattress laying in a depurated dreamy Bowery dumpster.

HELLTOWN INC. "THIS TOO WILL PASS" can be emotionally and unpredictably jarring, as if Charles Dickens, William S. Burroughs, Edgar Allan Poe and Count Carl Tanzler squared off in a demolition derby.

My Big Stick bandmate Yanna Trance makes a cameo "subliminal" vocal appearance, even my puppy at the time, the late great Bipsil briefly occupied the studio and did some howling. All the interesting, thought-provoking and eerie elements come together on this raucously rebellious reissued release. I'm pleased to see this rare project saved from fading into obscurity, and find a new audience in an ever increasing dystopic and desperate society, I hear HELLTOWN INC. as a prophetic harbinger, alerting the listener to pay attention to the danger and unpredictable risk of modern-day crisis. This is the soundtrack of deeply disturbing and troubling times, and I appreciate being involved in the post-production of the initial release on Sound of Pig Music in 1988.

THE MISSING TRACKS (COMPILATION APPEARANCES AND SUBMITTED MATERIAL)

Max Eastman and I were unable to track down three pieces that Helltown Incorporated released between 1985 and 1988. "Which Word?" appeared on the New Flesh tape label's *Hell* compilation. "Dead Radio Transmission" was on the *Noise From Nowhere II* compilation tape (also New Flesh).



"Incidental Industrial Musick" was contributed to a gallery group show in either Brussels or Munich aided by the kind auspices of Chris Dercon, director of PS-1 who facilitated the connection. "IIM" was a spare piece of soundscape recorded over a period of hours in the basement storage space in PS-1.

SIDE A TRACK INFORMATION

A1. Guard with Life (Brian SET/Giles) 1983-87

Original sound source recorded by Edward Giles in 1983. Additional effects and final mix by Brian SET in 1987.

I was still entrenched in Punk/Hardcore music in the early 80's, but the records my friend Jarv gave to me influenced new directions in what sound/music/art could be. Many "experiments" in audio sounds and recordings were conducted as far back as 1979. Most of these cassettes were poorly dubbed collages of bits of radio and urban field recordings, but none of them were worthy of releasing.

However, this track recorded in my room at my parent's house was clear sounding by using a Casio VL Tone synthesizer, a wrecked bass guitar, some effect pedals and a trashed practice amplifier that had great reverb. It's dedicated to my grandparents, my mom and my brother Peter "Pete Sake". Brian SET mixed in some minor effects, compression and engineered the overall sound quality and volume, the smooth fades were his touch.

A2. The Devil Inside Me (Giles) 1985

I used samples of AM/FM, radio static and the Casio VL Tone synthesizer along with a Roland SH-101 to complete this track. The title is self-explanatory and is a slight nod to pulp fiction writer Jim Thompson who penned the classic noir novel "*The Killer Inside Me*" in 1952.

A3. Burn Them to Ashes (Then Burn the Ashes) (Brian SET/Giles) 1986

This track is basically Brian SET's. It was a sampled loop he created and edited and was used in both Triggervision and his side project Temple of Set. I treated the

original sample with some other rackmount effects and fed it into my sampler. So, it's a 3rd generation sample being technically wrangled.

A4. Sidewinder AIM-9 (Giles/Brian SET) 1985

Brain and I used a voltage controlling device to slow a Panasonic tape recorder down to half speed and ran a cassette of feedback and overdrive from a dying practice amplifier through a 4-channel mixer. There is some Casio VL Tone in the mix as well. I was reading a lot of military magazines like *Soldier of Fortune* and watching "war porn" videos about missile guidance systems and fighter jets around this time. The "Sidewinder AIM-9" is an air to air projectile capable of eliminating rocket bombs, missiles in flight and several other air defense ordinances.

A5. Helltrain (Giles/Brian SET) 1985-88

This track used several layers of voices and natural reverb from the NYC subway systems. I had a few hours of ambient sounds from the subway recorded over a period of three years on both cassette and microcassette. Brain lent me some gear in 1988 to complete the track. The subterranean labyrinths of the subway system with its crime, and metallic rust and urine scent is a metaphoric "hell," So all aboard! The baby crying is my brother Peter "Pete Sake" as a bonus!

SIDE B TRACK INFORMATION

B1. Your Children (Giles) 1985

The sound textures were inspired by sound artists Rik Rue, Jeph Jerman of Hands To, and Eric Lunde who were huge inspirations to me in the 1980's. The voice in the background is actor Steve Railsback who played Charles Manson in the 1976 TV mini-series "Helter Skelter." Which is right up there with "Guyana Cult of the Damned" about the People's Temple and Jim Jones as fine examples of tabloid drama TV. Hollywood is the exploitation capital of America, and the 70's and 80's were aplomb with sensational crimes and death cults, not much has changed. There's a wink-nod also to the spirit of Monte Cazazza, Boyd Rice, Genesis P-Orridge, and TOPY for connecting various cults and historical cultural artifacts together.

B2. Temper, Temper (Giles) 1986

I found a self-help subliminal tape for those experiencing anger management issues at a thrift store buried the voice under a mix of a motorized cleaning appliance, the Casio VL Tone synth, and some treated tapes. The same tapes were the main sound source for Helltown Inc.'s confrontational Lismar Lounge 1986 show where a glass of ice was thrown at me by one of the Cycle Sluts from Hell band members who became furious at the performance and volume. Great times!

B3. Repetition (Giles) 1983-87

Another simple setup of repeating sound recorded and treated and re-recorded. This was recorded at PS-1 museum in an installation room I created in a spare janitor's closet called the "*Cathode Ray Mission*" (a reference from the movie Videodrome from 1983) which was on the third floor, and down the hall from James Turrell's "*Meeting*" permanent installation room.

One of the details of my job at PS-1 was to open the motorized roof of the "*Meeting*" to allow the sky to be seen from inside the room. Since I lived around the corner, I was able to be at the museum starting at sundown and wait until night, which would usually take 3 to 4 hours. I would open the Cathode Ray Mission's door and invite visitors in to sit in the reclining chair, and take a few minutes to relax. This track, as well as several others I composed for the installation were collected for the "*Music from The Cathode Ray Mission*" tape (slated for 1989 or 90 release, but was unfortunately never realized or released.)

B4. Oh, The Sweet (Giles) 1988

With vocals by Yanna Trance/Big Stick

The repeating phrase "Oh, the Sweet" is from a worn-out, seven-inch single of MacArthur Park by Richard Harris from 1968. Yanna Trance and John Gill from the band Big Stick assisted in recording the "subliminal" voices that were buried in the mix. Yanna's And John's words were improvised and I never asked what they actually said to keep the message a secret, adding to the mystery often embedded in art.

B5. Random Shooting (Giles) 1988

For this track, I recorded several gun fights from various films and television programs including; Apocalypse Now! Scarface, The Wild Bunch, The Godfather, The French Connection, The A-Team, Combat, The Rat Patrol and War is Hell (which was the film Lee Harvey Oswald was watching when he was arrested at the Texas Theater in Dallas.) There is a slight sawtooth "buzz" from the oscillator and a sine tone from the Casio VL Tone buried in the mix to fill up any sonic gaps between the film's multiple sound levels and recording quality.

B6. Stolen Words (Giles) 1987

This is an excerpt of an interview writer Gregg Rickman conducted with science fiction novelist Phillip K. Dick from 1981 in Orange County California. Big up's to "Rockin" Ray Sage, drummer of the New York band Reverb Motherfuckers for supplying me with a dubbed cassette copy. In this clip Phillip ruminates on several different philosophical concepts that germinate in his novels.

What sounds like room ambience, or traffic rumble under the voices was actually added on a separate track by using an oscilloscope and the Casio VL Tone synthesizer through the same crappy practice amplifier that was also used on the 'Guard with Life' and 'Sidewinder AIM-9' track. An equalizer pedal and band pass filter were used to dampen the highs and mid-range. The amp was placed speaker up on a table and recorded from six feet away on a Walkman tape recorder in the basement storage area of PS-1 museum in Long Island City NY.

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